Press, Economy & Other Woes

Chronicles of Culture

Volume 2, Number 6 November/December 1978

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Contents

4 Editor's Comment — Leopold Tyrmand

Opinions & Views

6 A Tale of Two Ef(ph)rons — Kenneth Kolson
— Nora Ephron: *Scribble Scribble: Notes on the Media*

9 Beliefs and Verbal Vehemence — Ernest van den Haag
— Martin L. Gross: *The Psychological Society*
Thomas Szasz: *The Myth of Psychotherapy*

11 Saint Marx or Oversimplification — Paul Gottfried
— Jacques Ellul: *The Betrayal of the West*

13 GNP and the Spiritual Defects of Modern Man — Stephen Maloney
— Irving Kristol: *Two Cheers for Capitalism*

15 Ignorance, Power, and Liberty — Jeffrey St. John
— Tom Wicker: *On Press*

18 Exhorting Fiscal Sin and Sinners — Clarence Carson
— William E. Simon: *A Time for Truth*

Commendables

19 Poetry, Society, Human Self — Gordon M. Pradl
— David Holbrook: *Sylvia Plath: Poetry and Existence*

20 Crozier's Warning: *Strategy of Survival*
Molnar's Reflectiveness: *Christian Humanism: A Critique of the Secular City and its Ideology*

In Focus

21 Singer's Glory: *Shosha*
White's Exhibitionism: *In Search of History*

Waste of Money

22 Schlesinger's Sentimentality: *Robert Kennedy and His Times*

Stage

22 Lives Fractured by Rubbish
— Lanford Wilson: *The Fifth of July*

Screen

23 Hollywood's Degradation and Fall — Eric Shapearo
— *Eyes of Laura Mars*
— *National Lampoon's Animal House*
— *Who'll Stop the Rain*
— *The Buddy Holly Story*

The American Scene

25 Motherly Instinct — Think Till the Very End

Journalism

26 *Policy Review's* Promise
Special Offerings

27 *Time's* Selective Memory

28 *Chicago Tribune's* Semantics

Liberal Culture

28 Oh! Not Again! — Love and Death Among Subhumans — Spiritual Disinheritance — Intrafamily Sex

Polemics & Exchanges

29 The Subtleties of Propaganda or *Twelve Angry Men* Revisited — David H. Hirsch

Vol. 1, No. 1, September 1977
The Feminine Novel of the Seventies

Vol. 1, No. 2, November 1977
The Literary Season of Venom and Muddle in America

Vol. 2, No. 1, January/February 1978
Nabokov Remembered

Vol. 2, No. 2, March/April 1978
The Cult of Deficient Thinking

Vol. 2, No. 3, May/June 1978
That's Entertainment

Vol. 2, No. 4, July/August 1978
Critical Choices

Vol. 2, No. 5, September/October 1978
The Midyear Harvest

Tyrmand: Comment; Molnar on Gardner *(On Moral Fiction);* Fox on Greene *(The Human Factor);* Manion on Gordon *(Final Payments);* Stillman on Irving *(The World According to Garp);* Scott on Jones *(Whistle);* Walsh on Casey *(An American Romance);* Commendables; In Focus; Waste of Money; The American Scene; Stage; Screen; Journalism; Liberal Culture; Polemics & Exchanges.

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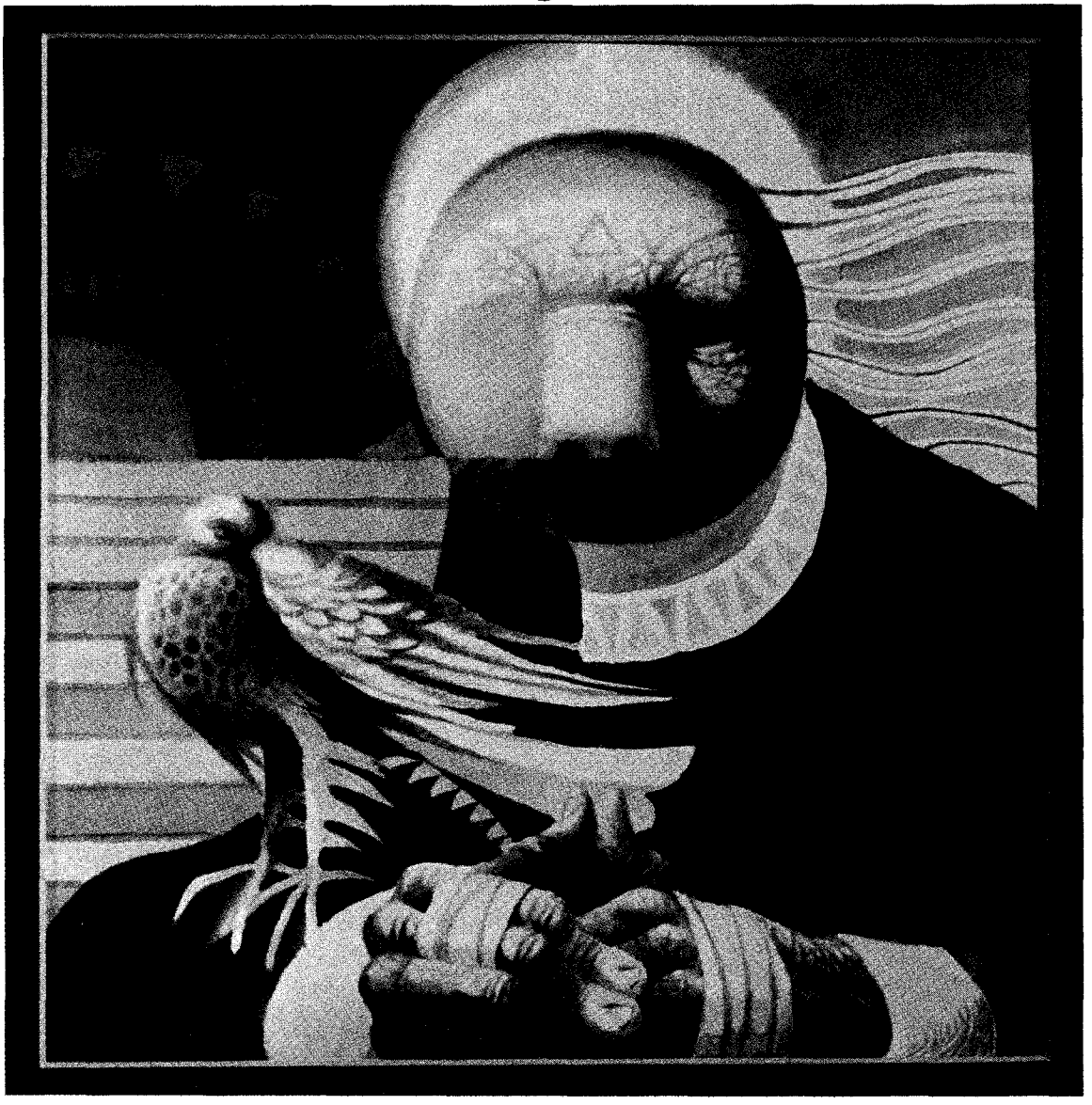

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Editor's Comment

In contrast to what the liberal propaganda infuses into the popular American consciousness, the modern secular antiliberalism is fundamentally an intellectual movement which — thus far — has yet to reach the masses in a coherent, politically processed manner. A few decades ago, it gained impetus from a group of university professors who perceived the moral horrors of communism, the perverse inanities of liberal economic "solutions," and the cynical vulgarity of liberal culture. Its foes falsely associate this movement with low-brow, right-wing politics, Big Business, or suspect religionism.

The truth is that for half a century low-brow fanaticism has been mostly on the left in American politics, and big money has been a generous source of liberal power, a glue linking together two omnipotent liberal establishments — the political one with the cultural one. After all, the Kennedys are multimillionaires whose bombastic posturing on behalf of the downtrodden never inclined them to renounce their wealth. The Rockefeller Foundation and the Mott Foundation (General Motors' money) could be spotted recently among the underwriters of The National Resource Center Against the Radical Right, together with the National Consumer League, United Auto Workers, National Council of Churches and Gay Activists Alliance. This zealotry goes far beyond the personal connection between big money and leftist politics: it somehow determines the general cultural climate in America. Radical film stars these days are multimillionaires, so are countless radical intellectual artists and writers. The Ford and Guggenheim foundations pour hundreds of millions of dollars into liberal and radical causes, and it takes some doing to find nonliberal, or conservative, intellectuals and scholars on their lists of grants. The multibillion dollar advertisement and public relations industry is ever ready to champion liberal causes: no one ever saw Madison Avenue up in arms defending nonunionized workers, but everybody has seen its strenuous efforts on behalf of radical chic and California grape-pickers. The multimillionaire Marlon Brando, and his equally endowed colleagues, would consider it an insult to suggest that they contribute financially to the action fund for keeping universities free from governmental intervention; they would immediately provide money to any leftist initiative to politically undermine the freedom of American education. *Time* magazine would consider it beneath its dignity to review Professor Molnar's book, ask Professor van den Haag for an opinion, or consult Professor Robert Nisbet; it will, however, prominently advocate books of "socially alert" (that is, left-radical) Christian "moralists," feature opinions of psychological quacks with impeccable liberal credentials, and seek consultation of modish revisionist historians who know how to sensationalize history by catering to liberal prejudice.

And so it goes — the everlasting liberal distortion and abuse so persistent that it smacks of absolutism in liberal sheep's clothing. The liberal politician John Anderson, when facing a conservative in a primary election, knew perfectly well that his opponent's money came from a mail fund-raising campaign, that is, from a mass of modest donations from conservatives; nonetheless he spoke constantly about an unnamed cabal, a financial conspiracy to defeat him — which is an obvious falsification of reality. Concealing the facts in politics is an accepted tactic. In this case, however, it had much more serious implications. It signaled an ideological bigotry of totalitarian nature, an encroachment upon a truth much more significant than political truth, actually an attempt to structure a socially dangerous myth. Perhaps Mr. Anderson does not comprehend that those who oppose him are *people,* not elites, or right-wing clans, or obscurantist fundamentalists; his brand of liberalism entitles him, in his mind, to opposition only from shady quarters, not from decent Americans whom he cannot conceive as *rationally* opposed to liberal ideas and voting records. He, himself, thus becomes a mental victim of the liberal propaganda machine whose fibs he indiscriminately buys, having been taught by life that truth does not pay in politics. He seems not to understand that politics has become a function of culture, and cultural lies, tactical or not, have feedbacks different from political ones. Which is exactly why, these days, strong antiliberal currents are suffusing all sectors of the American society.

Under these conditions, to attain a primary effectiveness, nonliberals and conservatives in America must begin their own truthful and responsible muckraking. Without this unsavory activity it will be impossible to undo the harm done, for example, to the equal opportunity principle, which, after all, still remains an arch-American ideal. We still live in a reality where someone better than average is put into a rigid denominational box. "He is a great scientist," you routinely read in the press, "*and* a liberal," which means *good* by connotation; whereas you also read: "He is a great writer, *but* a conservative," which means *bad* by connotation, thus you are asked to forget his name, it's not even worth mentioning in the future, because what he stands for can only be denounced. Such a state of affairs will not be reversed without some resolute antiliberal unkindness which will eventually expose, for the benefit of the nation, modern liberalism's nature. *The New American Review* has, of late, come up with the term: "Gentlemen-Socialists," meaning those victorious and celebrated sociobehavioral radicals in the academe, arts and letters who can now afford to project the air of lofty and benign gentlemanliness. I'm afraid many nonliberals and conservatives have thus far not understood their role. Although civility and honor are high on the list of conservative tenets, the conservatives must first start pinning on the liberals the latters' obvious sins and aberrations

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in an uncompromising way.

The matrix of liberal heinousness, villainy and deceit is the media. These are, indeed, strong epithets, but they do not originate in anger, rather in a necessity for precision. During the last midterm election, anchormen of all three networks reported on the victory of the conservative senator from North Carolina, each hastening to add that his campaign was the most costly in the history of senatorial races. What they all unanimously chose to omit was that Mr. Helms, exactly like Mr. Anderson's opponent, had really received six million dollars, an enormous sum, mostly in little contributions from a huge mass of conservative faithfuls who deemed his race crucial and representative of their own views, whether they felt in tune with him from Nebraska, Arizona, or New Hampshire. Helm's case, judged by unprejudiced standards, is a paradigm of small donation democracy, possibly the most democratic form of protest against the complexities and contradictions of a political system, well-designed but infected with cynicism, sophism and corruption. What can be more democratic than little people who are willing to deprive themselves of money they need badly, just to voice their ideological preference — since donors in Wyoming and Arkansas have little sociopolitico-economic interest in the election of a Senator from North Carolina. But the anchormen, those feudal power brokers of an allegedly democratic medium, are interested neither in honest interpretation, nor in truth, nor in Democratic or Republican politics: they are interested only in liberal omnipotence, patronage and influence, so they knowingly smirk on camera to insinuate that God only knows where this immense money came from, maybe from satanic capitalists, or some right-wing conspiracy, and they unceremoniously cut Mr. Helms off the air when he tries to explain. Politics matters little to TV moguls, but ideology matters very much; an overall indifference to Mr. Helms, or even personal sympathy, have to be set aside when it becomes necessary to do him in as an ideological enemy — and anchormen did it with an obvious relish on their telegenic faces.

This is what makes it necessary for the nonliberals and conservatives to muckrake these days, for only pungent detail and merciless exposition will visualize, in the nation's mind, bedazzled for decades by liberal propaganda, the heinousness that must and should be called liberal. It is the only way to prevail over the absurd notion that Democrats and Republicans can be knavish and crooked, but what's liberal *cannot* be dirty according to a superimposed sense of ethics and decency. It's an absurd notion, but deeply ingrained in the contemporary American conscience.

In such an undertaking, the nonliberals are deprived of the crucial instrument which remains a firmly liberal monopoly and makes futile any effort to seek truth, redress and success — that is, the mass media.

To Mark Twain, the press was a "black-hearted scoundrel," and there are many in this country, after nearly a century, who think of the media in precisely the same way. If Twain saw in the American press a monstrous source of lie and obloquy, today we would be wary of expressing our reservations about the press with Twain's unwavering certitude. An intense critique of the American communication media from the nonliberal and conservative viewpoint is going on now in books and independent publications. The picture that emerges is gloomy: even if the accuracy of information is beyond any doubt much more trustworthy than in Twain's day, the manipulative potential of the press cancels this gain. Through some complex sociohistorical process, the big city media, even if politically variegated, have culturally become almost uniform in their irrational liberalism. And the big city media, even if not always followed by the hinterland media, create the cultural climate of the country.

What brings about the media power in today's America? Most likely, it is a unique blending of social, economic and cultural influences into an immediate force. A new monolithic quality and concept of might, unknown before, emerges from fusing these three elements together. It then acquires a new ethos derived from the specific, absolutist, taboolike interpretation of the First Amendment, one of the cornerstones of American democracy. The follies and monstrosities of this ethos are countless and frightening. "A central point about the free press," says Eric Sevareid, TV's top guru, "is not that it be fair, though it must try to be; not that it be accurate, though it must try to be that. But that it be *free.*" This is a chilling sociomoral pronunciamento, and it is regarded by the American press as a nonnegotiable commandment — without any possible recourse for those who would demur to any rational or moral qualification, or to an extrapolative value. "Error," says Tom Wicker (whose book is reviewed in this issue), "can sometimes be a vital and unavoidable consequence of the search for truth, and error must therefore be tolerated, or at least not be punished, lest there be no search for truth . . ." A scary totalitarian principle lurks in these words: what Wicker demands is no less than impunity for *any* error, not admitting that he already has at his disposal the means with which to conceal errors, to void any attempt to expose them. Neither Socrates, nor Thomas Becket, nor Galileo asked for such immunity, and it's doubtful whether punishment for their errors would ever have stopped them from searching for truth.

Thus, it seems that the American press, by absolutizing its position, becomes the foremost totalitarian element in the democratic American universe. Totalitarian because it does not just inform, as it claims to do, but because it invades

continued on page 31

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A Tale of Two Ef(ph)rons

Nora Ephron: *Scribble Scribble: Notes on the Media;* Knopf; New York.

by Kenneth Kolson

When Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton squared off "like two cocks" in Washington's first cabinet, it was understood that the ground rules did not prohibit the press from being employed as an instrument of party warfare. Accordingly, Jefferson and James Madison brought Philip Freneau to Philadelphia to edit the *National Gazette,* and Hamilton countered by helping John Fenno bail out his *Gazette of the United States.* During most of the nineteenth century the American press remained unabashedly partisan, a reflection of the quaint notion, prevalent in those days, that free trade in ideas has a way of redounding to the public good.

This mentality was successfully challenged by progressivism, a movement animated by a distinctly antipartisan spirit. The progressives argued that cities should be run not by mayors, but rather, by city "managers." Indeed, the country was not to be run by politicians of any stripe, but by experts in the science of administration. The progressives sought to replace the spoils system with the "merit" system; patronage was to give way to desert; the bosses and grafters were to be sacrificed to the cause of "good government." America's newspapers, having swilled a deep draught of this progressive bumbo, solemnly took the pledge to abandon their partisan ways and to maintain a scrupulous neutrality in their coverage of public affairs. Thus, it came to be understood that in order to be a good journalist one had to be "objective," that is to say, one had to be a moral and political eunuch. Ultimately, journalism came to be thought of as an honorable profession, requiring four years of apprenticeship at an institution of higher learning, or at least at a school of journalism.

To the progressives it must have seemed incontrovertible that "objective" reporting was possible, and that the best newspaper was the one that would most dispassionately publish all the news fit to print (another idea that strikes sophisticated moderns as almost comically facile). But the bubble of neutrality was easily burst. For one thing, critics pointed out that there is a limit to how dispassionate a journalist—indeed any person—can be. As David Brinkley has observed, being perfectly neutral is tantamount to being a "vegetable." On this subject Mr. Brinkley has displayed a candor uncharacteristic of American journalists, going so far as to confess: "News is what *I* say it is. It's something worth knowing by *my* standards."

Critics have also observed that those who report the news are likely to be inextricably mired in an incestuous relationship with those who make it, and in the United States that usually means with public officials, patricians, plutocrats, and a motley menagerie of peacocks and popinjays. When this became generally understood—during the 1960's—the myth of neutrality was debunked once and for all. It was then that the political left accused the "straight" press of complicity in a "System" that was, it alleged, racist, venal, violent, and corrupt; in a word, "obscene."

How were honorable and conscientious journalists to respond to such an indictment; journalists such as Walter Cronkite, for instance, whose tendency to get choked up at state funerals and on assignment at Cape Canaveral had put the lie to his claim of "neutrality"? One thing was clear: there was no going back to the blatant partisanship, or "Remember the Maine"-style chauvinism of the good old days. That was passé, even at the *Chicago Tribune.* But if the American press was not to be openly partisan, if it could not be neutral, and if it was not to be implicated in an odious "System," what was it to do? The question was rendered all the more imponderable by the circumstances of the day. If striving for neutrality was futile, then how was a responsible journalist to cover such events as the war in Vietnam, race riots in the cities, or violent protest on college campuses? The short answer is that when the gauntlet was laid down, a mad scramble ensued as mainstream journalists tried to prove to their accusers that they had not "sold out" to the "System." And when the press lost its inhibitions about exposing its biases it revealed itself, not as a cacophonous assembly offering ideas for trade in a competitive marketplace, but as a chorus warbling a single insistent note: liberalism.

If there was ever any doubt that the press constitutes one pillar of the Eastern Liberal Establishment, that doubt was erased by publication in 1971 of Edith Efron's *The News Twisters* (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing). Her analysis of network coverage of politics during the 1968 presidential campaign led her to the following conclusions:

—The networks actively slanted their opinion coverage against U.S. policy on the Vietnam war.
—The networks actively slanted their opinion coverage in favor of the black militants and against the white middle-class majority.
—The networks largely evaded the issue of violent radicals.
—The networks actively favored the

Dr. Kolson is a political scientist who teaches at Hiram College, Hiram, Ohio.

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Democratic candidate, Hubert Humphrey, for the Presidency over his Republican opponent.

—The networks actively opposed the Republican candidate, Richard Nixon, in his run for the Presidency.

In summary, "the Presidential campaign of 1968 and its major issues were handled in a partisan fashion by all three networks." Efron exhaustively documented this partisanship and its multifarious forms of expression, which ranged from blatant propagandizing (for example, a reporter's characterization of the white middle class as "racist, selfish and mentally limited") to the use of subtle euphemistic distortions (for example, a reporter's reference to violent assaults against Governor Wallace as being the work of "hecklers"). Efron's analysis, remarkable for its thoroughness and lucidity, must also be commended for its courage, for insofar as her portrait of the press was reminiscent of Spiro Agnew's "nattering nabobs of negativism," Efron was bound to be regarded in some quarters as an enemy of the First Amendment.

As convincing as was the case built by Efron and others against the ideologically monotonous mass media, one rarely hears her concerns expressed today. It has become a dead issue. Why? The answer is that the media have resisted the charge of liberal bias by denying the significance of the liberal-conservative distinction. The fourth estate now admits that it is not "neutral," but at the same time claims to be neither liberal nor conservative; it sees itself merely as taking the side of "the people" (presumed to be righteous) in their protracted struggle against "the interests" (presumed to be sinister). It is maintained that this type of advocacy, no matter how strident, is not to be confused with liberalism, or even with partisanship, because it promotes the public interest, which is, by definition, nonpartisan. Thus, the press' view of consumerism, conservation, education, public health and morality, freedom and equality—all have in this way become sacred cows, so self-evident that any suggestion to the contrary is regarded as practically indecent.

Media coverage of the campaign for Proposition 13 in California is a good example. Voters who supported Thirteen were often described as "frustrated" and "fed up" with unendurable property taxes. This is no doubt true. But surely it is also true that many of these same voters were intent on promoting, not only their own private interest, but a conception of the public interest that is hostile to, among other things, the "welfare mess," state subsidies for research into the ways in which whales respond to serenades, and community colleges that offer courses in astrology and voodoo, and public school systems that graduate tens of thousands of illiterates each year.

"I always find that just to have an opinion requires so much work. . . . Since I stopped doing a column, I haven't had very many opinions."
—from an interview with Nora Ephron by *New York Times Book Review*

"Pure delight . . ."
— *Playboy*

The liberal bias in American journalism, while much more subtle, is more pervasive now than ever. I refer, of course, to the New Journalism. Spawned while America was being "greened" during the 1960's, the New Journalists now may be found swarming over the slick pages of such trendy journals as *New York, Esquire, Rolling Stone,* and the *Village Voice.*

Ultimately, the New Journalism can be reduced to only two ideas. The first is that a perfectly objective journalism is not possible, and the second is that the conception of the public interest promoted by the Old Journalism is disputable, that is to say, partisan (and, implicitly, wrong). So far so good. But since the New Journalists, like the progressives, think that neutrality is an impossible condition for rational discourse, they are quick to conclude that all talk of the public interest—indeed, ratiocination itself—is a sham. Throwing up their hands in despair, they resort to reveling in an orgy of subjectivism.

To my way of thinking the quintessential New Journalist is Hunter Thompson, the "exquisitely" depraved "Dr. Gonzo" who covered the 1972 presidential election for *Rolling Stone,* his stories appearing later as *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72* (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1973). That Mr. Thompson rejects the Old Journalistic dogma of objectivity may be seen in his outrageous portraits of such respected American reporters as John Chancellor (a "dope-addled fascist bastard"), James J. Kilpatrick (a "famous crypto-nazi"), and Evans and Novak ("far-out latent papists"). The worst thing about the Old Journalism, as far as Mr. Thompson is concerned, is that it is beholden to the Old Politics, and for Mr. Thompson that subject has the effect of an hallucinogen which, when vented in his astonishing prose style, permits the reader a peek into the abyss of nihilism that is his natural milieu. Old Politician Henry Jackson, for instance, is described by Mr. Thompson as a "worthless asshole," and Senator Muskie ("Big Ed") is likened to "a vicious 200-pound water rat." But of all the Old Politicians, none incurs Mr. Thompson's rhetorical wrath more than the "treacherous, gutless" Happy Warrior of American liberalism. According to Mr. Thompson: "There is no way to grasp what a shallow, contemptible and hope-

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lessly dishonest old hack Hubert Humphrey is until you've followed him around for a while on the Campaign Trail. . . . [Humphrey] should be put in a goddamn bottle and sent out with the Japanese current."

Mr. Thompson's unique brand of lunacy is entertaining, to be sure, but it is also instructive insofar as it represents the New Journalism in its most pure form. His work is, if nothing else, honest, because the essence of the New Journalism (and of the New Politics) is cynicism, and Mr. Thompson's cynicism extends, not only to politics and human nature generally, but to *himself.* As a result Mr. Thompson does not even attempt to conceal his self-contempt, or the wretchedness of the wildly irrational world through which he careens. This means that his work becomes a kind of caricature of the New Journalism. Like all good caricature, truth is at its core, and so it is not without some redeeming social value. Unfortunately, not all New Journalists are so willing to live according to the code they impose on others; in truth, most are shameless hypocrites.

Enter Nora Ephron. *Scribble Scribble: Notes on the Media,* a collection of her *Esquire* columns (she is a contributing editor), aims to lampoon the Old Journalism, and it has no doubt caused some red faces at the editorial offices of the *New York Post, Playboy, People, Time,* CBS, and the *Palm Beach Social Pictorial,* to name but a few of her victims. Tough investigative reporter that she is (she raked her first muck for *Cosmopolitan* and *Good Housekeeping*), Ms. Ephron here produces characteristically hard-boiled exposés of such media stars as *The New Yorker's* Brendan Gill (he is an ass, as evinced by his having shamelessly boasted in his book about making Skull & Bones at Yale); chic publisher Clay Felker (he has midriff bulge); and Craig Claiborne (his food column in the *New York Times* is part of the "new pornography"). Conservative readers in particular will enjoy her profiles of Theodore H. White, Daniel Schorr, and the *Christian Science Monitor's* Godfrey Sperling. But unlike Hunter Thompson, who indiscriminately lambasts *all* of the ladies and gentlemen of what he calls the "linear press," Ms. Ephron spares a few of her Establishmentarian colleagues, apparently because she simply cannot bring herself to abandon the idea that journalists, insofar as they selflessly serve "the public's right to know," are the Guardians of American democracy. And so columnist Russell Baker, for instance, and the "assassination reporters" of the *Dallas Times Herald,* manage to escape the pig-sticking, as does Carl Bernstein, who, although wedded forever in the public's mind to Bob Woodward, is in real life Mr. Nora Ephron.

Which brings us to the subject that is most thoroughly and sympathetically explored in this book: Ms. Nora Ephron. The attentive reader of *Scribble Scribble* learns that Ms. Ephron loves Double-Crostics, but is not particularly good at it; that she renews her subscription to *Gourmet* whenever she gets married (unaccountably, she does have a few endearing bourgeois hang-ups); that she keeps apartments in both New York City and Washington, cooks beef borscht, worries a lot about her appearance, and watches public television. The last-mentioned vice constitutes a rich vein for the self-confessed "media columnist." In the midst of her lucubrations on the weighty BBC drama "Upstairs, Downstairs," for example, the erudite Ms. Ephron astounds even her most enthusiastic fans by delivering up pithy, simultaneous, and wholly gratuitous epitaphs for the second and sixth presidents of the United States. It seems that while Hazel, of "Upstairs, Downstairs," was a real "pill," she was "not nearly as terrible a pill as Abigail Adams and her entire family." What a pity that our forebears, lacking Guardians as faithful as the celebrated Woodward and Bernstein, had no defense against such "pills" as John and John Quincy Adams.

If Ms. Ephron fails to measure up to the lofty standards of the New Journalism (set by Hunter Thompson), it is because her cynicism, unlike that of Mr. Thompson, has limits. Specifically, it does not extend to herself or her work. That she is aware of this hypocrisy is apparent in her criticism of journalists who indulge in what she indelicately refers to as the "circle jerk of media interviewing media." At this point she avers: "The logical ending for this column, I suppose, is for me to stop writing a media column. . . . I really ought to give it up. I'm not going to, not yet." But why she insists on keeping her hand in is a complete mystery, especially since by her own admission journalists "aren't as interesting as the things they cover."

Because Ms. Ephron is right in thinking that journalists who write about journalists aren't very interesting, her book would not be worth reviewing were it not for the fact that Ms. Ephron is both an epitome and eminento. While the redoubtable Edith Efron toils in the relative obscurity of *TV Guide,* Nora, fending off the challenges of Shana Alexander, Charlayne Hunter-Gault, Sally Quinn, et al., has emerged as heiress apparent to the first lady of American journalism, Barbara Walters. There would be something fitting about her ascension, actually, since it would dramatize the fact that the distinction between the New and Old Journalisms has always been more apparent than real. What, after all, is the difference between making a fetish of one's eccentricity (the method that New Journalists employ to prove how liberated they are), and making a fetish of one's having no idiosyncrasies at all (the Old Journalism's obsession with neutrality)? And how far removed, really, is Nora's "up-close-and-personal" exploitation of media (and, more recently, academic) superstars from the more vulgar, Hollywood-oriented type of sensationalism that one finds in the

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New York Daily News, or *People,* or even the *National Enquirer?* Hence my conviction that while the New Journalism's disrespectful treatment of the Old may (like Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin) be good for a hearty chuckle or two, it should inspire those citizens most sensitive to the claims of justice to demand that Ms. Ephron and her cult-followers be given the skewering that *they* so richly deserve.

What the republic sorely needs is a journalism that will brazenly flout the rules set down by *both* the *New York Times and* Hunter Thompson. For so long as American journalism remains the hothouse of Walter Winchell-clones, Anthony Lewis' militant partisanship, *Rolling Stone's* brazen obscurantism and Nora Ephron's juxtaposition of voyeurism and conceit, for just so long must the literate citizen be marooned on an arid and desolate moonscape, a Sahara of the prose art. □

Beliefs and Verbal Vehemence

Martin L. Gross: *The Psychological Society;* Random House; New York. Thomas Szasz: *The Myth of Psychotherapy;* Anchor Press/Doubleday; Garden City, New York.

by Ernest van den Haag

Some years ago Philip Rieff published his *The Triumph of the Therapeutic.* No work has equaled the depth, brilliance and originality of his analysis of the relation of psychology to society. Others here and there have sought to add to his work—with more or less competence. *The Psychological Society* attempts to, although mainly it attempts to debunk psychoanalysis. (Rieff, incidentally, does not appear in the index) A journalist known for a nose which leads him to marketable subjects, Mr. Gross has given us *The Doctors* and *The Brain Watchers* before. His formula—the same whatever the subject—tells us that we are being cheated, or even endangered, certainly overcharged, by whatever profession he debunks. It sells worthless, ineffective or dangerous services or at least services worth less than we pay. There are always disappointed people willing to buy Mr. Gross's books, to find confirmation of their suspicions in the mélange of factual tidbits, anecdotes, selective quotations, statistics, experiments and authoritative statements which Mr. Gross slaps together. People who like intellectual junk food gobble it up.

In his dealing with psychotherapy Gross is occasionally right although he does not tell anything new, and often misinterprets what he gleans from secondary and tertiary sources. It is true, for instance, that, as therapy, psychoanalysis is often unsuccessful (so are most things currently available) or that it is credited when a spontaneous remission took place (as is often the case with medical treatment); it is also true that much of the psychoanalytic theory has not been demonstrated to be correct. Gross mixes up these two things and misunderstands each. He gives the impression that the therapy is (1) always unsuccessful because (2) the theory is altogether invalid. One does not follow from the other and neither is true. But it is better to consider *The Psychological Society* as a symptom.

Psychological do-it-yourself books (*I'm O.K. You're O.K.* etc.) regularly make the bestseller lists. They promise help to everyone who follows the formula offered. Psychological nostrums practiced as therapies by gurus of ever new schools are similarly rewarding (to the gurus). Lately, "sex therapists" do well. But so do primal screamers or self-asserters or rational therapists. Why are the utopian promises these therapists invariably hold out so readily accepted? Obviously the books and the gurus promise what people want and feel deprived of. It used to be money (*I Can Make You a Millionaire*). But now people worry more about whether they are happy enough, confident enough, loved enough, orgasmic enough . . . Obviously money is no longer the most acutely felt problem. People have found out that "you can't buy happiness." Some of their present worries are iatrogenic, promulgated by the books they read. But others originate independently.

We live in a society whose institutions are no longer capable of conferring meaning on our lives. Yet, since we are no longer absorbed by a quotidian struggle for survival, we need more than ever to feel that our lives have some meaning. We want to live right and need confirmation that we are spending our time well, that our efforts, our sufferings and our pleasures make sense, that we amount to something. Most people are not able, unaided, to give meaning to what they do. The "significant others" who once controlled and confirmed our self-esteem and shaped our self-concept have moved away. We have many contacts but few relationships. Churches quite often have become impotent, as much in doubt about their faith and even their liturgy as their followers. Anyway many people are all too understandably alienated from them. (Some churches, breathlessly trendy, blame the death of God for their inability to cultivate the Divine. Anyway, they prefer social work.)

Under these circumstances, people look for nostrums to overcome their feelings of futility, their desperate boredom, be it restless or listless. Drugs are resorted to. And renewed para-religious disciplines, even the Reverend Moon, must have helped some, else the

Professor van den Haag, a distinguished scholar, is now president of the Philadelphia Society.

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rabbis wouldn't be so excited. Psychoanalysis too is received as a panacea by many. Bits and pieces of it are given out, out of context (e.g., Scientology), to solve all problems; and the dubious practitioners who offer them in ever new distortions acquire the prestige lost by institutionalized religion. The healing pseudo-sciences or therapies have become a growth industry. Understandably so: if cancer is widespread, so is cancer therapy. If known actual therapies cannot promise help in many cases, pseudo-therapies will. Finally, debunkers such as Mr. Gross will profit by debunking everything—snake oil and actual medicine. They need not worry about discriminating one from the other: their books can appeal to those disappointed by either product. For while snake oil helps nobody (actually it can help those who can be helped by suggestion, though what helps is not intrinsic to the product), medicine also leaves many people disappointed—necessarily so. There are no panaceas. Gross caters to the disappointed and the suspicious in his helter-skelter compilation. It won't help or enlighten—his "critical analysis" is neither—but it does little harm and kills some time.

Unlike Mr. Gross, Thomas Szasz must be taken seriously. He deserves our gratitude for having drawn attention to the fate of harmless eccentrics, institutionalized because they were uncomfortable to have around. Unfortunately Dr. Szasz has now become shrill, indiscriminate and a little silly. He believes not just that some people have been mishandled, but that mental illness and (therefore) psychotherapy are altogether myths. The belief is supported mainly by verbal vehemence. Paragraphs such as the following speak for themselves.

"Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) claims about psychoanalysis were fundamentally false and fraudulent. He did not discover a new science, a science of the unconscious; nor did he develop a new method of treating illness, based on free association, transference, and resistance. His science is a system of inspired invectives concealed in medical metaphors; and his treatment is a contrived and controlled conversation relabeled with the technicized terminology of his self-styled science. In short, Freud devised a new rhetoric which he represented as a scientific theory and a medical therapy."

To the extent to which the suggestions about the role of rhetoric and metaphor in Freudian theory buried here (buried deep) are interesting, they are not original with Szasz. Only his rancorous vehemence is. Where Gross is a journalist writing a saleable concoction, Szasz seems a man obsessed to a point where he uses an accomplished style, a good mind, a deserved reputation to pursue his obsession *ad absurdum*. The obsession comes down to Szasz' insistence, (and anyone who thinks otherwise is a malevolent fraud) that psychopathologies are not sicknesses in the sense in which he would like to define "sickness," and that psychological treatments are not therapies in the sense in which he would define "therapy." So what else is new?

Surely the psychological phenomena under discussion are felt to be problems by those who suffer from them and by their environment. Surely, contrary to what Szasz sometimes suggests, they are not consciously contrived. The people affected by them want to meet these problems and, in many cases society, too, is interested in solving them. So, provided that the problem is well-defined and responsive to treatment, what difference does it make whether or not it is called a sickness and medical terminology is used in dealing with it? And why, anyway, must we presume that a medical terminology, or treatment, involves a sickness? Cosmetic surgery is surgery, but the nose that has been changed for aesthetic reasons was not sick. Nor is the pregnant woman treated medically or surgically by obstetricians. Why then is it so terrible if, when a person who is considered "mentally ill" or more often, suffers from some psychic difficulty, is helped to gain fuller control over his feelings and his behavior, we call the difficulty sickness, the treatment therapy and the desired effect cure?

Szasz' insistence on calling psychoanalysis a religion will not wash, for psychoanalysis, unlike religion, requires no faith and is most useful, therefore, to those lacking it. Of course, psychoanalysis can be misused and treated as religion. So can vegetarianism and almost anything else, true or false. And surely, those not schooled well in methodology sometimes confuse moral and clinical findings. But there is no more reason to collapse the clinical into the moral (or at any rate nonclinical), as Szasz does, than there is to collapse the moral into the clinical (or pseudo-clinical) as he accuses everyone else of doing. Some physicians are ignorant or foolish or exploitative; some are altogether quacks. But only an unbalanced person would decide that all of medicine is quackery. Perhaps there are more quacks, fools and exploiters among psychotherapists than among internists. (At best, this is a guess.) The field is newer and it might be easier to hide one's ignorance or malpractice. But the indiscriminate wholesale condemnation of *The Myth of Psychotherapy* is of no more help than a wholesale encomium would be. It does not make the needed distinctions. It does not help the reader to understand and discriminate. And it does not tell us anything new. Dr. Szasz's main advantage over Mr. Gross is that he knows English grammar. It is not enough. □

Next *Persuasion At Work:*

ORGANIZED LABOR's ANTI-BUSINESS AGENDA FOR THE EIGHTIES

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Saint Marx or Oversimplification

Jacques Ellul: *The Betrayal of the West;* Seabury Press; New York.

by Paul Gottfried

The Betrayal of the West is Jacques Ellul's latest indictment of particular aspects of modern culture. In his earlier books and in his lectures as professor of law at the University of Bordeaux, Ellul gained a reputation for himself both as an apologist for Christian revelation and as a despiser of materialistic values. As a critic, he takes the Christian rejection of worldliness and makes it his point of departure in attacking arrogant technocracy. He has no particular use for cities, inasmuch as they consign the spiritually uprooted to a plastic and mechanized culture. Among the great nations, he excuses neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union for humanity's descent into an uprooted existence. Both countries are judged to be profoundly inimical to things of the spirit: the U.S. because of its expansive capitalist economy, and Russia because of its oppressively anti-Christian government. My impressions of Ellul's previous writings left in my mind a view of him as a crotchety reactionary, who would have eagerly applauded Pius IX's condemnation of "liberalism, secularism, and modern civilization." Although not as unqualified in my own disapproval of these phenomena, I can sympathize with one who ridicules what have become the dominant superstitions of our age. And I opened *The Betrayal of the West* expecting to find the type of lament described above.

Nonetheless, these expectations were soon disappointed. The volume often reads like the old Jean-Francois Revel, who until quite recently swooned over the arrival of a noncommunist, communitarian Left. Never mind that Revel rejected both Jesus and Marx in favor of hippies, and that Ellul, on the other hand, adores the first two while chastising the last. Both writers exhibit the same totemic attachment to an abstraction called the "left," coupled with a marked dislike for capitalist and capitalism. Both Revel and Ellul present parochial leftist arguments in the form of universal truths. In *Neither Jesus nor Marx* Revel proclaimed the advent of the American hippie an event of cosmic importance. Through the primitivist communitarian style of this new social rebel, according to Revel, a plausible alternative was finally emerging to capitalism and state socialism. Such proclamations, which turned out to be untrue, no doubt appealed almost exclusively to radical intellectuals. But then Revel was only speaking to the people who mattered: that part of mankind which, like himself, believed the hippie commune represented the highest form of social organization. The rest of mankind, which was neither conventionally leftist nor hippie radical, had not even proved itself capable of thought. Given this circular logic, there was no need in *Neither Jesus nor Marx* to consider nonleftist positions.

Ellul takes a leaf from Revel in the way he draws up sides for *The Betrayal of The West.* Although his work is a polemic directed against the Modern Left, the arguments are those of one leftist to another. In fact, Ellul lets us know that no one but a leftist deserves to be critically addressed; for the Right, particularly the capitalist Right, is intellectually and morally beyond redemption. His fight for the West is being undertaken for the Old Left, supposedly the supreme embodiment of civilization, against the nihilistic forces of the New Left. If Ellul might only bring truth to Jean Paul Sartre, Francois Mitterand, and the *rédacteur en chef* of *Le Monde,* then perhaps the Left would continue to serve civilization.

Much of his criticism deserves to be taken seriously. Although a self-confessed *gauchiste,* Ellul denounces Soviet imperialism, Red Chinese tyranny, and the senseless brutality of Third World dictators. He also dissects the current leftist glorification of the savage, perverse and insane — as well as the desperate attempt to attribute some special wickedness to the West which is supposedly absent from other cultures. After discussing the racism, imperialism and religious intolerance of non-Western societies, Ellul reminds us that it is not in its cruelty, but in its ideals of personalism and freedom, that the West has differed from other civilizations. Because of the higher devotion to the individual, Western man has felt guilty about repressive imperialist acts which African and Oriental people take for granted. In one particularly biting passage, he shows how the concept of poverty has been redefined by the contemporary Left:

> "Like the bourgeois Christians of the nineteenth century, the Left distinguishes between the good poor (those who walk in rank, those who are good sheep of the revolution, those whose situation can be exploited for propaganda purposes) and the bad poor (those who refuse to regard themselves as well off under a Communist regime, those who rebel without rhyme or reason, simply because they are unhappy, and without giving heed to the plan for a world revolution, those who represent traditional values and a traditional culture). These bad poor must be simply repressed and suppressed."

Professor Gottfried, of Rockford College, is a frequent contributor to these pages.

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In spite of his ridicule of leftist obscurantism, Ellul leaves little doubt about his own allegiance to revolutionary radicalism. He asserts that "liberal, bourgeois capitalist democracy" never honored its commitment to "the individual, reason, and freedom"; "the values [that bourgeois democracy] proclaimed were abstractions; they were algebraic signs and hypocritical justifications of a reality that was utterly different." At the same time, "the Left, and only the Left, made its own all the values proper to the West, while also breaking new paths." According to Ellul, "The Left proclaimed the rights of the poor," and by emphasizing social justice "was now endeavoring to bring to fruition the institutions of Greece and the promises of Christianity." The traditional Left also brought forth two beatific visions: the one anarchist and the other socialist. The first stressed "the individual and freedom with complete and radical seriousness"; while the second, although "more prudent in its approach," also learned from Marx "that the end in view was always the individual and his freedom."

At first it occurred to me that Ellul might be whitewashing the pre-World War II Left to disarm the hostility of his readers. Like those Harvard professors who supported McGovern to go on "being heard" as critics of the Left, it seemed possible that he, too, was assuming protective coloration. Nonetheless, on second thought, this interpretation cannot be sustained. His defense of the West is often that of a sentimental and confused Marxist. Marx is seen as the very personification of Western compassion, rationality, and coherence. The great revolutionary is identified with a quintessentially Western rejection of an unjust and irrational society: in short, of bourgeois life.

The problem with Ellul's repeated equation of Marx and the West is either one of redundancy or vulgar oversimplification. If Ellul is proposing that Marx, the anarchists, and even the fascists, drew upon *some* Western ideas, while rejecting others, the statement is simply self-evident. And yet, his text would suggest something else: that the purest expressions of the Western tradition in thinking and ethics are to be found in Marx and in his revolutionary teachings. Why not make the same claims for Thomas Aquinas, Edmund Burke, or Arthur Schopenhauer? The reason is to be sought in circular thinking. Once having reduced the uniqueness of the West to its rationalism and revolutionary impulse, it is then possible to praise Marx as the highest representative of a civilization already seen as his mirror reflection. The aura of the saintly Marx is then allowed to invest that Left which Ellul associates with his youth. In 1930, we are told, "The Left alone, with its great and generous vision . . . truly embodied the West that had been forged in the fires of the last two thousand years." In fact, in 1930 most of the leaders of the French Left were apologizing for Stalin with the same dishonesty that their descendants now show in defending Castro and Mao. In 1930 the anarchist Left was committed to violence, and the communist Left to following Moscow's orders.

Having defended his own version of the Western heritage, Ellul ends by urging his generation to re-embrace the West as an unfinished revolutionary task. Modern man is now dominated by machines and "mechanisms." Deluded by antirevolutionary politics, he has become captive to a "technical society" which is stifling his individuality and the spirit of rebellion. The "war against technique," not the battle against capitalism alone, is to be the true Western revolution which marxian socialism had only anticipated. Despite the Christian wrapping, the kind of sentimental apocalypse being preached bears resemblance to the utopianism found in Jerry Rubin and in other Luddites of the New Left. What exactly Ellul's vision has in common, if anything, with Marx and Jesus (two of his heroes) remains unclear. And yet, this Christian anarchist, who admires Marx and marxism, may think himself, like Walt Whitman, great enough to embrace his own contradictions. □

Books in the Mail

The Death of Christian Culture, **by John Senior; Arlington House; New Rochelle, New York.** Liberalism, secularism, and nihilism as opposed to Christian culture.

Exclusionary Injustice: The Problem of Illegally Obtained Evidence, **by Steven R. Schlesinger; Marcel Dekker, Inc.; New York.** On the exclusionary rule in American Supreme Court jurisprudence.

John Randolph of Roanoke: A Study in American Politics, **by Russell Kirk; Liberty Press; Indianapolis.** A third edition and third publisher of Russell Kirk's massive work.

The New American Political System, **edited by Anthony King; The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research; Washington, D.C.** On changes in the American political system from 1960 to the present.

Planning, Politics and the Public Interest, **edited by Walter Goldstein; Columbia University Press; New York.** A symposium sponsored by Columbia University Seminar on Technology and Social Change and AT&T on the issue of economic planning.

What's Wrong with Public Education — From A to Z — : A Reference Book for Taxpayers, **by Carl Walter Salser, Jr.; Halcyon House; Portland, Oregon.** About the implications of removing the public control of our schools and transferring it to the governmental sector.

The Welfare Debate of 1978, **by Gordon L. Weil; The Institute for Socioeconomic Studies; White Plains, New York.** A detailed examination of public assistance programs.

The Women's Movement: Achievements and Effects, **Congressional Quarterly, Inc.; Washington, D.C.** A reference work on the social, economic and legal impact of the "women's movement."

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GNP and the Spiritual Defects of Modern Man

Irving Kristol: *Two Cheers for Capitalism;* Basic Books; New York.

by Stephen Maloney

> "Even if we are spared destruction by war, our lives will have to be changed if we want to save life from self-destruction. We cannot avoid revising the fundamental definitions of human life and human society. Is it true that man is above everything? Is there no Higher Spirit above him? Is it right that man's life and society's activities have to be determined by material expansion in the first place? Is it permissible to promote such expansion to the detriment of our spiritual integrity?"
>
> —Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn "A World Split Apart," graduation address at Harvard University

Some conservatives are highly willing to praise Solzhenitsyn—as long as they don't have to find out what he is saying. The same is true of another fine writer and moralist, Irving Kristol. Rather than *Two Cheers for Capitalism* in Kristol's new book, we get the sound of one hand clapping. In their recent writings, both Solzhenitsyn and Kristol reveal a growing distress at the amoral, anticultural, materialistic direction of modern society.

Of course the Russian author is routinely dismissed as a "Russian mystic" by the trendier members of the academic set, the type of individual who takes *The New York Review of Books* seriously. And some of Kristol's writing is worth dismissing, as when he assumes in the *Wall Street Journal* the *persona* of a philosophical "Mr. Fixit" for contemporary capitalism. At his best, however, Kristol's love of his country is equaled only by his love of truth—and by his eloquence. At his best, Kristol approaches the hard-won moral insight of the Russian exile.

Dr. Maloney is a frequent contributor to Chronicles of Culture.

Some reviewers of Kristol's book (*Business Week,* and even his own *Wall Street Journal*) find him deviating from the Gospel According to Friedman and Hayek. They warn with alarm that he may do harm to the cause of orthodox Republicanism. They have missed the point. Like Solzhenitsyn, Kristol starts with an analysis of the material condition and economic organization of society—and ends with an examination of the spiritual defects of modern man.

Both men realize, as we must, that there are no alternatives to a society based upon a good measure of economic liberty. Kristol: "Socialism, communism and fascism have all turned out to be either utopian illusions or sordid frauds." Solzhenitsyn: "Socialism of any type and shade leads to a total destruction of the human spirit." In contrast to the Russian, Kristol emphasizes the political and personal liberty that characterizes our society. For Solzhenitsyn, "freedom was given to the individual conditionally, on the assumption of his constant religious responsibility." However, they both see the rise of political authoritarianism filling the vacuum left by the decline of the central institutions of Western civilization: the corporation, the university, and the state for Kristol, the church for Solzhenitsyn. In fact, Kristol describes the corporation as "a species of dinosaur on its lumbering way to extinction." The body of the dinosaur is our affluence; the tiny head contains the intellectual scraps that currently justify our economy and society.

Perhaps the paradigmatic vignette of

> "He [Kristol] served on a Nixon task force and was a principal of *Encounter* when it received laundered CIA money."
>
> — ***Saturday Review***
>
> "Here we see that Kristol's continuous falsification of the historical past has a unifying theme: simply to legitimize domination . . . In the end his 'tragic' vision seems to contain nothing larger than the fear that . . . men like himself and his friends and epigones at *Commentary* and *The Public Interest* . . . will be brought down from their present positions of eminence after years devoted to 'making it' . . . That, we see, is what distinguishes Kristol's vision most of all from Marx's."
>
> — ***The Nation***
>
> "At times the chapters suggest what it might be like to read a whole volume made up of nothing but old Mobil ads . . . His two cheers sound more like a desperate prayer."
>
> —***The New Republic***
>
> "[It] smells mustily of the Nixon era."
>
> — ***New York Times Book Review***
>
> "When Kristol attempts to defend the appropriateness as well as the legitimacy of bourgeois society, he becomes another enfeebled, unconvincing apologist for liberal capitalism. In response to the obvious failings of modern capitalism, Kristol can propose no valid remedy."
>
> — ***Library Journal***
>
> "With friends like Irving Kristol, capitalism does not need any enemies."
>
> — ***Business Week***

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our times consists of Nixon and Krushchev arguing over the number of television sets in America. In a world *without* ideas, numbers become the only reality. The great *summas* of the past seem to have been replaced by pocket calculators. Instead of examining the contents of heads, we count them. Kristol says our society is now based on the questionable assumption that "there is no superior, authoritative information available about the good life or the true nature of human happiness." The Russian calls this pernicious doctrine "anthropocentricity," the view that puts man at the center of the universe and eradicates God from consciousness.

With the vision of the men of affairs bounded by the bottom line, their intellectual defenders in the new class have fallen back upon their last stronghold: the argument that our economic system is legitimized by its efficiency and its success. It delivers the goods. But Kristol sees this argument as revealing an "inverted moral sense." In other words, it turns morality upon its head to claim that an activity is honorable because it is profitable. Let us provide illustrations from our own experience: heroin peddling (illegal) and the making of soft-core pornographic movies (legal) are highly profitable. Are they therefore moral?

So many sophisticated defenses of capitalism—Kristol mentions the Nobel Prize winners Friedman and Hayek—are really elaborations of the simplistic philosophy as expressed by Alexander Pope, "Whatever is, is Right." This leads us to an absurd provincialism that discards the past in both its moral and historical dimensions. And the Gallup Poll replaces the Gospel as the source of relevant distinctions.

Of course we cannot avoid confronting directly the question of freedom. At times our culture seems to be endlessly replaying Dostoevsky's "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor." In the abstract sense of the absence of restraints, our freedom may be increasing. But as Kristol wisely observes, freedom is as much ontological as it is sociological. "The average man in the nineteenth century," he informs us, "had fewer 'rights' than his counterpart today, but he was far more likely to boast about his being a free man." As Kierkegaard warned us a century-and-a-half ago, freedom without faith is a literally dreadful situation.

Most modern conservatives worship at the altar of freedom. The question Solzhenitsyn and, to a slightly lesser extent, Kristol, are asking us is this: do we have *too much* freedom, coupled with too little moral and intellectual purpose? Too often our "freedom" degenerates into the bizarre behavior of the nightmare world where God is dead and "everything is permitted." Kristol describes today's "massive numbers [of] 'free spirits' empty of moral substance but still driven by primordial moral aspirations." And Solzhenitsyn anathematizes the "irresponsible freedom" exercised to produce child pornography, homicidal films and terroristic atrocities.

What, to coin a phrase, is to be done? Obviously we must recognize as the great Southern Agrarian Richard Weaver did, that *ideas have consequences*. All too often, otherwise responsible intellectuals mimic the liberal "new class" by analyzing the contemporary dilemma as if it were only a case of which group gets to divide the spoils of capitalism. We address spiritual problems in commercial terms—in statistics, in economic abstractions, in jargon about "progress." We forget what the great poet-philosopher Donald Davidson reminded us: that men do not live by GNP alone.

Our problems are not primarily economic; they are spiritual. In Kristol's words, "It is the death of God, not the emergence of any new social or economic trends, that haunts bourgeois society." All the electric toasters and television sets we can produce, Solzhenitsyn says, will not redeem our time from moral and spiritual poverty.

Being a conservative means preserving those ideas and institutions (including private property) that have served us well. Being a conservative means refusing to accept depravity, refusing to ignore the permanent things, the incarnations of value. True conservatism, Kristol indicates, means *looking back* to the philosophers such as Coleridge, Carlyle and Newman, "all those who found it impossible to acquiesce in a 'progressive' notion of human history or social evolution."

Through its reliance on the stupefaction of television and the omnipresence of "intolerable music" (Solzhenitsyn) modern society tries to drown out insistent voices from the past, tries to avoid confronting unpleasant realities, tries to evade the fact of our mortality. Constant chatter about standard of living cannot eliminate this hard truth of Kristol's: "In every society, the overwhelming majority of the people lead lives of considerable frustration, and if society is to endure, it needs to be able to rely on a goodly measure of stoical resignation." We cannot produce the conditions needed for this resignation by promising a swimming pool in every backyard, a stereo in every "family" room, two cars in every garage.

A revitalized family, community, church will lead, almost miraculously, to a revitalized, *freer* commercial life. The reverse is obviously not the case, as the best minds of our time, including Kristol and Solzhenitsyn, are informing us. The great Russian author exemplifies this truth: resignation to existence does not preclude the will to transform society. The moment is now; the opportunity is ours to seize. As Solzhenitsyn says, "No one on earth has any way left but—upward." □

Next *Rockford Papers:* "The American Innocence"

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Ignorance, Power, and Liberty

Tom Wicker: *On Press;* Viking Press; New York.

by Jeffrey St. John

> "Most of the evils that continue to beset American journalism today, in truth, are not due to the rascality of owners, nor even to the Kiwanian bombast of business managers, but simply and solely to the stupidity, cowardice, and Philistinism of working newspapermen. The majority of them, in almost every American city, are still ignoramuses and proud of it."
>
> —H. L. Mencken
> *Journalism in America,* 1927

The passage of half a century might appear to make this jaundiced view of journalism outdated. Mencken was writing about a breed of newspapermen he thought a step up from streetwalkers and a notch below a precinct police captain. The majority of newspapermen in Mencken's day wrote for a largely immigrant audience and, as a consequence, a college education was not only unnecessary but regarded with contempt. Mencken himself, for example, never went beyond high school and acquired his extensive learning and scholarship from the Baltimore Pratt Library and a life-long love affair with the printed word. Mencken never wanted to do anything else with his life. "I find myself more and more convinced," he wrote a few years before his death, "that I had more fun doing news reporting than in any other enterprise. It is really the life of kings."

Mencken was perhaps one of the first to realize that the newspaper profession faced two fundamental perils: a militant prejudice toward liberty and learning by most journalists, and their seduction by politicians promoting the all-powerful state. "If experience teaches us anything at all," he wrote, "it teaches us this: that a good politician, under democracy, is quite as unthinkable as an honest burglar. His very existence, indeed, is a standing subversion of the public good in every rational sense. He is not one who serves the commonweal; he is simply one who preys upon the commonwealth. It is to the interest of all the rest of us to hold down his powers to an irreducible minimum, and to reduce his compensation to nothing. . . ."

The advent of the FDR New Deal in 1933 found Mencken upholding this view while much of the press in Washington was romanced, flattered and seduced by Roosevelt. "The New Deal," he wrote, "will be doomed the day the newspapers of the country cease to fill their columns with official propaganda in favor of it, and devote their space to the laborious amassing of truth about it."

Tom Wicker's work is largely an exercise in denying the sinful relationship the liberal national media has had with government power since the FDR New Deal. One has doubts, however, that Wicker is even aware that a relationship exists between the current growing hostility toward the national news media by the public and the simultaneous growing hostility toward politicians and bureaucratic big government. Instead, Wicker sets out to prove two things. First, that the hostility toward the press or national news media today is hopelessly wrong-headed by Americans who don't know any better. Second, that the press is really an adversary of government while maintaining no vested interest in political power and no influence in shaping the events of Tom Wicker's time. This book becomes, therefore, a massive exercise in evasion of evidence and experience.

The problems for the American news media, in Wicker's warped perception, began at the Republican National Convention at the Cow Palace in San Francisco in 1964 when former President Eisenhower electrified that audience with a denunciation of the pro-New Deal, anti-middle-class bias of the liberal national news media. The subsequent characterization of the GOP candidate, Barry M. Goldwater, in those news media as one who would repeal the gains of the New Deal manifested itself in the extraordinary spectacle of the media portraying the Ari-

Jeffrey St. John is a Washington-based syndicated newspaper columnist, network commentator and author of books.

"He is an old-fashioned Southern liberal. His heart bleeds and burns. His capacity for indignation is inexhaustible. He is the nag of conscience in a time of torpor and cynicism and greed and stupidity, a kind of ambulatory reproach. He seems determined in his column not to let us get away with it, whatever 'it' is."

— *New York Times*

"A searching assessment of the present state of journalism."

— *Newsweek*

"Thoughtful, highly readable . . . important for anyone concerned about the handling of news and its impact on American life."

— *Wall Street Journal*

"Charm and honesty . . ."

— *New York Times Book Review*

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zona Republican as a Nuclear Napoleon abroad and a heartless character out of Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* at home. "For the first time in a fifteen-year career in journalism," Wicker observed of the angry fists of the 1964 GOP delegates directed toward the Cow Palace's press box, "I was forced to acknowledge to myself that my colleagues and I were hated and feared by millions of other Americans."

"The Goldwater nomination," Wicker adds with the first of numerous evasions, "was almost a model for change that lay ahead. Just as the Goldwaterites perceived the men and events of 1964 differently than those men and events seemed to be portrayed in the newspapers and on television, Americans generally began to find it more difficult in the 1960's and the 1970's to reconcile 'the news' they read or watched with their own perceptions, beliefs and attitudes."

Wicker does, however, acknowledge what cannot now be denied, but which the news media disbelieved when Goldwater said it during the 1964 campaign, namely that Lyndon Johnson was a bold-faced liar when claiming in 1964 to be a peace candidate; in fact, he was already conducting an undeclared war in Southeast Asia. And here is where Wicker becomes warped in his perception.

The wars of this century, in which America has been involved, have had the effect of corrupting the judgment and perception of intellectuals and journalists. Wicker perceives only that Vietnam was the product of the Cold War and the anticommunist mentality of his generation, and the free ride the press provided John F. Kennedy. To him, the CIA, the Johnson and Nixon administrations are the villains of the Vietnam nightmare, thus evading the two critical episodes in which the U.S. news media played a critical role in shaping events.

The first took place three weeks before President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, November 22, 1963, when then pro-American President Diem of South Vietnam was overthrown by a group of Saigon generals with the active encouragement and active assistance of the U.S. CIA. The groundwork, for what many of us in the media at the time saw as either a prelude to deeper American involvement or the fall of Saigon to the communist Viet Cong, was prepared by three principal Saigon U.S. correspondents: David Halberstam of the *New York Times,* Malcolm Browne of the United Press International, and Neil Sheehan of the Associated Press. All three helped orchestrate a media campaign in which Diem was portrayed as a corrupt dictator oppressing a Buddhist minority who were incinerating themselves in the streets of Saigon. The late newspaper correspondent for the now-defunct *Herald Tribune,* Marguerite Higgins, provides ample evidence in her 1965 book, *Our Vietnam Nightmare,* that the press reports of all three played a powerful part in influencing Washington policymovers and shakers to sanction Diem's overthrow. Higgins draws the conclusion that we would never have become mired in the Vietnam nightmare if we had stuck with Diem.

In a 1971 New York television show with Neil Sheehan, I apprised him of the perception, prevalent among journalists like myself, that toppling Diem meant something far worse than a deeper involvement for the U.S. to try

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

Accentuate the Negative . . .

"We have recently completed the first full year of the *Chronicles of Culture*'s existence, and it's time for a bit of summing up and soul-searching.

We are most often accused of two venial sins: liberal-baiting and negativism. Of course — both charges have the common rockbottom. We do concentrate on Liberal Culture because it is the reigning sociocultural sovereign whose wisdom and morality we question and challenge. Caring for values of intellect and literary excellence, we unfortunately have little to point out as satisfactory answers to the libcultural dominance. Whenever we run across them in fiction, arts or humanities, we praise them to the skies. However, as there is not enough of them of the quality we would wholeheartedly approve, we are often accused of sounding negative by our own brethren in *Weltanschauung.*"

from the *Editor's Comment*

Also:
Opinions & Views — Commendables — In Focus
Waste of Money — The American Scene
Stage — Screen
Liberal Culture — Journalism
Polemics & Exchanges

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to curb a political-military disaster largely of our own making. "Perhaps if many of us in Saigon," he replied, "had had that same vision of the future as you, things might have turned out a lot different than they did."

Wicker writes of Halberstam and Sheehan as colleagues with clean hearts, hands and consciences when it comes to a war which is the basis of his perception throughout his work. This is less reprehensible than his refusal to face the part that the U.S. media played in crippling the conduct of the war by giving full play to the U.S. procommunist circles which manipulated and orchestrated the escalating domestic antiwar movement after Lyndon Johnson became President in a landslide against Goldwater.

If one believes Wicker, the U.S. news media from 1965 on was embarked on a moral crusade to prevent their own government from pursuing the results of its folly in Vietnam. Evaded, of course, is the critical part the press played in providing a propaganda forum to the antiwar feelings and how it became an integral part of the Viet Cong, Chinese and Russian war strategies. This, of course, was not because the news media in America was committed to communist victory in Vietnam, rather it was committed to the political defeat of both Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon at home, at any cost. It never occurs to Wicker that whatever his good intentions, these two goals served the same end.

The most compelling evidence that Tom Wicker is proud of his contrived ignorance is his regurgitating the myth that the 1968 "Tet" offensive by the Viet Cong was the event that "shattered official pretensions to inevitable victory" and forced Lyndon Johnson in the Spring of 1968 not to seek reelection. The U.S. military had always maintained that the Viet Cong "Tet" offensive was a shattering defeat for Hanoi. The news media reported it as a defeat for the United States and it was that perception that both prevailed and shaped events in this country and around the world. The *Washington Post* Saigon Bureau Chief at the time of the 1968 "Tet" offensive was Peter Braestrup, now editor in Washington of the *Wilson Quarterly*. Wicker knows him well, referring to him in his book as joining the Washington Bureau of the *New York Times* at the same time he did, in 1960. Ten years later, however, Braestrup shocked his Washington journalistic colleagues with a book that demonstrated with exhaustive documentation that, indeed, "Tet" was a crushing defeat for the Viet Cong and that the press played a major role in misleading Americans and world public opinion about the true nature of the offensive. The fact that the Viet Cong were able to conceal, with the help of the Tom Wickers of the world press, that it suffered a humiliating defeat proved enormously helpful in the all-important propaganda war that was part of the conflict in Southeast Asia. "The only way," observed Marguerite Higgins in 1965, "that the communists could make the United States welsh on its commitment to Vietnam is if American public opinion in the 1960's were to become as demoralized as French public opinion in the 1950's. This is something that communists are working very hard to accomplish, and there are a great many Americans unwittingly serving the Viet Cong objective of undermining the nation's will and stamina."

The full intellectual treason of the American news media in the Vietnam conflict remains to be written. Tom Wicker and the *New York Times* played an important role, posturing and pontificating to the public that what they did was an act of morality. Yet that same Wicker and that same newspaper find it hard to apply that same moralizing self-righteousness to the regimes in Southeast Asia that have now slaughtered hundreds of thousands in Cambodia and made concentration camp countries of Vietnam and Laos. The *Times* demands full disclosure from the U.S. government, but denies that it should comply with the same standard when its reporters are summoned before criminal grand juries.

This hypocritical double standard is one of the numerous reasons why the American news media is regarded with such sullen hatred and resentment by millions of Americans whose basic sense of fairness is offended over and over again. Having promoted the idea that unions should be granted a virtual state monopoly, the *Times* and the *Washington Post* are horrified when union power is used against them. But when the private sector business community opposes union power and government power these papers adopt their double standard of supporting the unions and big government.

Wicker's work is fundamentally intended to justify to readers a defense of monopoly press political power and its alliance with the political leaders who benefit from its benediction. The columnist-critic Michael Novak calls Wicker a "representative of the lunatic left," and justly so. Asserting that the press "mirrors the character of the American community," Wicker is unable to explain how the nonstop campaign of savaging each and every American institution, custom and convention that offends the media's anti-middle-class consciousness, is expressing the soul of America.

The best chapters of this book, to accord Wicker the fairness that he refuses to give to others, is his running report on his own involvement in the coverage of the Kennedy assassination in Dallas and his jaundiced view of the White House and the Presidents who have sought to manipulate and use him. But he does not care to realize that he, himself, is the manipulator of values and viewpoints. One such value that Wicker clearly does not believe in is individual liberty, the only thing that Mencken ever thought he or any other newspaperman should believe in.

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Wicker wants liberty for the press, but not for others. This is why he is guilty, along with most of the liberal news media, of moral and intellectual treason. Out of ignorance and an arrogance of power unchecked by any modesty of mind and heart, the Wickers of the world are the gravediggers of our free society, all the while believing in the balderdash that they are its guardians and saviours.

"It is this vast and militant ignorance, this widespread and fathomless prejudice against intelligence," observed Mencken, "that makes American journalism so pathetically feeble and vulgar, and so generally disreputable. . . . The delicate thing called honor can never be a function of stupidity. . . ." □

Exhorting Fiscal Sin and Sinners

William E. Simon: *A Time for Truth;* McGraw-Hill and Reader's Digest Press; New York.

by Clarence Carson

It is indeed a time for truth, and it is to his credit that former Secretary of the Treasury and Energy Czar, William E. Simon, sets forth some timely truths in this book. Two things are happily missing from his work. One is the argot of academicians, by which an appearance of learning obscures meaning. The other is the evasions by which politicians try to appear to be saying something but are concentrating on avoiding saying anything with which anyone can disagree, i.e., talk without saying anything. Mr. Simon is candid, forthright, and, we may hope, controversial.

Indeed, it can be argued that Simon has not yet learned to be a politician. If he is lucky perhaps he never will. That is not to say that he is unaware of the pressures and lures that turn a man into a politician. If he did not know of these already, several years in Washington under the Nixon and Ford Administrations should have provided him with some education on the subject. Even so, he did not occupy elective offices. He did not occupy a position of prominence as a result of repeatedly running for office. He did not live with the potentiality of defeat and humiliation which accompanies rejection which is the staple of political existence in America.

This may account for the fact that he provides little for us to go on as to how men are to be elected to office without developing those traits we abhor in many politicians. How can a man be elected—and, more important, re-elected—who does not become hypocritical, two-faced, and bow and scrape before the sacred cows born and bred of liberal ideology? The politician wants publicity, indeed, believes he must have it, but in order to get it, he must face the glare of television cameras, the obtrusive questions of reporters, and the final judgment of a predominantly liberal press. The media men are all too eager to flay him for anything said in a moment of candor which departs from the liberal litany of values. I think Mr. Simon is aware of the problem, but he does not concentrate on it, possibly because there is no ready solution to it.

He does see the problem entailed in the dominance of the academe, the press, the pulpit, and so forth, of liberal intellectuals, and he does make some proposals for dealing with it. He rightly discerns that thinkers, writers, and teachers who will speak for and defend liberty need to be nurtured and supported, and he offers some valuable suggestions on how this may be done.

The most striking portions of the book, however, deal with the fiscal irresponsibility of governments within the United States. It is appropriate that this should be so, for Mr. Simon knows whereof he speaks. He was in the Treasury Department during the time when New York City's fiscal crisis came to a head. His account of this crisis—how the city tried to subsist by borrowing against future income, the weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth of liberal politicians as their irresponsibility bore its inevitable fruit, the hypocrisy of leading bankers, and the attempts of sundry spokesmen to absolve themselves on the grounds that it was their compassionate efforts to help the poor that had done them in—is worth more than the price of the book. Mr. Simon is more than clever; he is brilliant in his analysis as he tears the compassionate claims to shreds.

What happened to New York City portends for the United States government, and other governments of the Western world, Mr. Simon tells us, if they do not change their ways. Indeed, the United States has been hardly more fiscally responsible than New York City. The difference is that our general government can prolong its deficit spending almost indefinitely by monetizing the debt, as can governments of other sovereign nations. There are consequences of course. The more money that is issued the less its value. People recognize the declining value and have less and less confidence in the government. At the far end of this process lies

> "The best that can be said for Mr. Simon's clichés, here repeated, is that Herbert Hoover's were even more unsuited to the times . . . Mr. Simon's wholly undocumented assertion that teaching in American colleges and universities is just ideological indoctrination is ignorant slander of teachers and students."
>
> — ***New York Times Book Review***

Dr. Carson writes on history and economics from Alabama.

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runaway inflation and worthless money. But until that happens, the real irresponsibility and almost certain bankruptcy are shielded behind the flood of dollars.

Mr. Simon declares that his greatest concern is with the loss of individual freedom and the economic despotism that now prevails in the United States. He pulls no punches in describing the impact on the ubiquitous regulations and bureaucratic controls by which they are enforced. He shows the least insight in grasping how entangled businesses are with government. The economic despotism of which he speaks is not simply government despotism over business. Many businesses share in the despotic controls by acting as instruments of government in extending political power over the individual.

In any case, Mr. Simon has made an articulate presentation of the ills which beset us as a people and an eloquent plea for reducing and restraining government by restoring individual liberty. It took courage to write such a book. It will take great tenacity by many people to restore the identity of Americans with their country by following his recommendations. □

Commendables

Poetry, Society, Human Self

David Holbrook: *Sylvia Plath: Poetry and Existence;* The Athlone Press; London; Humanities Press; Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey.

by Gordon M. Pradl

In offering a psychoanalytical-literary critical analysis of Sylvia Plath's work, one that depends heavily on "object-relations" theory, David Holbrook, an English writer and educator, necessarily extends the conventional boundaries of our responses to literature.

> "From this brief digression into the realms where poetry and philosophy—and *psychology*—merge and meet, it will be evident that for my purposes I cannot restrict myself to a mere literary analysis. We cannot solve the problems which arise from even a single phrase ('masturbating a glitter,' for example) without moving beyond the words into the realms of investigative psychology, and this will mean, in some spheres, conjecturing, about the life . . . I believe that we cannot understand her poetry well, and at times not at all, unless we recognize that she has a topography of her own, which is that of the world as the schizoid individual sees it."

This wider context which Holbrook chooses for his analysis of Plath's creations grows out of Holbrook's pressing concern over the state of contemporary culture. He sees much of the social environment as working against our natural inclinations. The reader in turn must be made aware of Plath's relationship to these forces.

> "We must defend ourselves against her falsifications, especially when they are the object of cults, in an atmosphere in which we are being urged to cultivate our psychoses and endorse decadence and moral inversion . . . One of the slogans of the German Baader-Meinhof terrorist gang was '24 hours of HATE each day': and we have this kind of moral inversion in culture as well as politics."

In demonstrating how Sylvia Plath enacts in her work the anguished cry for help of an extreme schizoid personality who yearns for "being" and rebirth in the frozen blankness of non-relationship and, ultimately, death, Holbrook is arguing that any adequate reading must take into consideration both the real and the false solutions in a work as they impinge on the central question of what it means to be human. What position we finally choose to emphasize reflects our own values out into the world, but Holbrook trusts that our creative nature will strive toward what makes for life, not toward what works against it. With this in mind Holbrook attempts a balanced perspective toward Sylvia Plath's achievement.

> "Sylvia Plath tells us that the world is full of hate: this may be valuable. But where she suggests that this hate can get out of hand and cannot be dealt with by our own efforts within ourselves, she is promoting irrationality and paranoia. . ."

One legitimately wonders, however, if Holbrook, for all his earnestness, hasn't lost sight of the poems themselves. For clearly the knowledge we are seeking to exploit in the teaching of English is something other than psychology. The solution to this problem, however, resides in the direction of time, as Holbrook is well aware when he refers to Rollo May:

> "Being, as May says, should mean *potentia*—the potentiality of what we truly might be. The significant tense for human beings is the future—for this belongs to intentionality. Sylvia Plath's existential confusion is that what she took to point forward in this way actually pointed to the termination of being and potentiality."

In reaching for *power* (which is really character, morally earned) with our students in English, in developing their capacities for self-making and

Dr. Pradl is an Associate Professor of English Education at the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences, New York University.

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poetic thinking, we are looking in a forward direction. Unlike psychology, our emphasis is not on understanding the past, but rather on understanding the future. And, if we will only take seriously, as Holbrook does, the dialectical relationship between literature and identity, we will insure the distinctiveness of our discipline: the quest for the potentiality of power. □

Crozier's Warning

Brian Crozier: ***Strategy of Survival;*** Arlington House; New York.

Brian Crozier, Director of the London-based Institute for the Study of Conflict, wrote on insurgency and terrorism, DeGaulle, Franco, and Chiang Kai-shek. Now he turns to the Cold War, to what the West's response should be to what he does not hesitate to call the Soviet aggression. He sketches the sorry history of the past three decades—the initial post-war rush across the maps of Europe and Asia by Stalin, then the period of Krushchevian laxity, and currently the very successful policies of Leonid Brezhnev.

"This has been a different kind of war," Crozier notes, " 'fought' for the greater part with nonmilitary techniques, such as subversion, disinformation, terrorism, psychological war and diplomatic negotiations, including conferences. More strikingly still, and unlike previous wars, the Third World War has been almost entirely a unilateral war of expansion from the Soviet land mass: a war of aggression with the rest of the world at the receiving end. The Western powers have occasionally reacted when their individual special interests appeared to be threatened. . . . But there has been no concerted response on the Western side."

Brezhnev's policy of détente has fueled the naiveté of those who would believe passionately the Soviets are perennially mellowing despite the perennial evidence to the contrary. Following the launching of his "Peace Programme" at the 24th Soviet Party Congress, Brezhnev pumped up the Red military budget, stirred up the Middle-East cauldron, financed world terrorism, jailed dissidents, and unleashed Castro on the African continent. These events of détente have not deterred the West from expanding avenues of trade with Moscow or letting down even further its already tenuous military guard.

Crozier warns that those of us in Moscow's "Target Area" (a term he prefers to the amorphous phrase "Free World") are approaching the crisis stage vis-à-vis Soviet imperialism. He urges the adoption of a new and realistic attitude to replace hazy visions and shabby posturings.

The Soviet Union, Crozier maintains, still has a variety of weaknesses the West could exploit if it possessed the will: the shortcomings of its economic system, the rising tide of internal dissent, the disloyalty of its satellites, its subject nationalities (the Ukrainians, the Baltic peoples, etc.), the Sino-Soviet split, and even (although this is tricky) the possibilities inherent in "Eurocommunism."

He urges a strengthening and enlargement of NATO with emphasis on rollback, counterterrorism and internal security. A "Department of Unconventional Warfare" would be created in the North Atlantic Alliance to present a unified response to Communist subversion. Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty would be reinvigorated as part of an overall beef up of "overt and covert propaganda and information"—even including the possibility of direct beaming of television signals in the Soviet bloc. He calls for the cessation of economic and military aid programmes to Third World Marxist governments and a tightening of trade with Moscow, and he argues for an amplified Western guerrilla-warfare potential —including "the possibilities of guerrilla action in Communist countries."

"The time for compromise and evasion is over," says Crozier, "There is no time left. . . .Unless the West reacts *now,* meaning before 1980, the chances are that the tide of retreat will be irreversible. And yet *the point of no return has not yet been reached.* If we react now, in the short time span we have left, we can turn the tide back and win." (DP) □

Molnar's Reflectiveness

Thomas Molnar: ***Christian Humanism: A Critique of the Secular City and its Ideology;*** Franciscan Herald Press; Chicago.

Humanism is a much-discussed topic these days. In his June commencement speech at Harvard, Alexandr Solzhenitsyn identified the central role of humanism in the ongoing degeneration of Western civilization. Federal courts are continually urged to remove it from the public schools in recognition of its essentially "religious" character. The *Humanist Manifestos* (1933 and 1973) proclaim the independence of man from the shackles of vain and restrictive religion, and foresee a humanistic future of international peace, cooperation, and atheistic brotherhood.

So this work by Thomas Molnar, professor of French Literature and intellectual history, is certainly a timely contribution to the ongoing discussion. Like his other books, it takes care to present the subject in the richness of its intellectual career, which in this case is nearly coterminous with that of Western civilization itself. Beginning with the origin of the celebrated humanism of the Renaissance, he traces the sequence of perversions of the traditional Christian vision of reality, a transformation which culminates in the humanism of the twentieth century, a full-blown secular ideology intent on replacing the Christian heritage of the West.

Professor Molnar's work reflects the

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breadth of his scholarship, and bears testimony to the awesome proportions of the real task, which is to "meet [humanism's] challenge in the areas of ideas of knowledge, of history and philosophy." In this task Dr. Molnar is joined by a considerable number of scholars whose work during the past generation has been dedicated to the theoretical examination of the impact of ideologies such as humanism on contemporary patterns of thought. This ongoing effort is as painstaking as it is indispensable; and Dr. Molnar's book is a welcome and worthy addition. (CM) □

In Focus

Singer's Glory

Isaac Bashevis Singer: ***Shosha;*** Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

This year's Nobel Prize for literature went to Isaac Bashevis Singer, a Jewish writer from Poland who has been a naturalized American for almost 40 years. He is an uncomplicated fictionist whose philosophy is perhaps best summarized by Hamlet's famous sigh: "There are more things in heaven and on earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy. . ." Singer writes and fantasizes about these things, and the prose which comes from his pen has a first-rate quality, sober and on occasion ironic. Simple-mindedness is Singer's strongest trump card, and he is sophisticated enough to know it, even if, every now and then, he wishes to pass for someone sufficiently suited to handle more twisted human psychologies and moral dilemmas. He is sensible enough, however, to recognize that the complexities of man, world and life transcend his generic talents and tools of cognition, so he invokes the help of dybukks, spirits and revenants — and he never fails.

As everyone in the business of quotation knows, Goethe once expressed pride in having inherited from his mother "die Lust zum fabulieren" (a desire to tell stories). To be sure, Goethe knew about writing stories with a certain something which is missing from Singer's creativity — namely the profundity of rationalizing and feeling. But in our arid times, when obscure neuroses and freakish abnormalcy constitute the mainstay of and title to literary "depth," Singer's stories of unrefined metaphysics, grounded in folktale mysticism, reveal charming relevance and validity. Therefore, it's refreshing and encouraging that storytelling has finally been rewarded by the Stockholm authority. And this with a bow to a culture which contained authentic depth, delicate and rich emotionality and fine intellectual values — and, after being brutally eradicated by the Nazis, now survives only in Chagall and *Fiddler on the Roof,* the last a rather trivialized version.

Singer's particular achievement lies in his making Yiddish, his native language in which he wrote all his work, an acquiescent and tractable instrument not only to convey his message, but also fit for adequate translation. This nearly extinct tongue, in Singer's treatment, becomes not only a state of mind but even a sociocultural substance.

Shosha is a sort of Singer compendium. All the familiar features of his writing are there: banality and charm, the gift of coloring people with life and the author's narcissism, the insightful probing into feelings and facts, which — the moment the magic of narration ends — makes us feel stranded in rather shallow waters. He has a kind of genius of being a bad and a good writer at once, in the same creative personality — and he always gets away with this duplicity. The protagonist of *Shosha*, a Yiddish writer by the name of Aaron Greidinger, is either Singer's alter ego, or Singer *tout court.* And in profiling Greidinger and his story, Singer exposes that which is most objectionable in his recent writing. In his early work, there was strong, poetical sensualism, which was sublimated into exquisite, discreetly erotic literature, always suffused with meaningful content, an organic part of human vicissitudes. In his later writing, as if under the dubious spell of current normlessness, Singer tends to present himself, either directly in a first-person narrative, or only thinly disguised as all sorts of "Greidingers," as an irresistible sexual athlete, in whose presence women become as soft and mellow as the Lower East Side cafeteria blintzes. A reader, even the most enthralled and sympathetic, is soon uneasy, knowing that the author is a septuagenarian, and did not always write this way. Is it then a susceptibility to tawdry fashion, or perhaps — a mere Freudian suspicion — an attempt to make up in fiction for a dearth of something that plagued his factual biography? (CC) □

White's Exhibitionism

Theodore H. White: ***In Search of History: A Personal Adventure;*** Harper & Row; New York.

Mr. White's massive, but not unamiable, ego trip tops best-seller lists, and there must be reasons for it. One, it seems to us, is to be found in the memoir's perfectly middle-brow quality, the sort which has long since saturated the American public discourse with the uttermost banalities packaged in all the glitter of pseudo-intellectuality which the synergic effort of the *Time-Life* civilization has thus far produced. Mr. White is the arch-master of the kind; his mental penetration of the texture of history unfolding around him — mostly around the lunch tables at which performers on or observers

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of the historical scene exchange insights with Mr. White — has the depth of a bowl of soup. Even journals exceedingly friendly to Mr. White, in which he's considered a contributor, did not hesitate to term his ideas about history commonplace. To us, Mr. White and his creative-intellectual profile was best epitomized by an interview in *Women's Wear Daily,* in which he enunciated:

> "The moment of standing aboard the U.S.S. Missouri and watching the Japanese come aboard [to surrender] . . . was a moment that was better than sex —"

The interview featured a recent photo of Mr. White in which he looked like all Seven Dwarfs incorporated. As we thought that those timeless little oldsters, charming as they are, are not notable for their expertise on sexual pleasures, according, at least, to the tradition of folk poetry, such a remark, "in" as it seems, puts any expertise of Mr. White into healthy doubt. The impression that Mr. White would do anything to remain on *Women's Wear Daily's* intellectual wavelength was further reinforced by his views on feminism:

> "It's about time women had their say in the laws governing them — laws that for 5,000 years have been made by old men with shriveled-up groins —"

This was enough for us to know where to locate Mr. White in the literary spectrum. □

Waste of Money

Schlesinger's Sentimentality

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.: *Robert Kennedy and His Times;* Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

Whatever historical insight, seminal ambivalence, superb penmanship, scrupulousness of research and attempts at objectivity emerge from these 1066 pages, there also emerges from them a Robert F. Kennedy who is a cross between a genius and a saint. This, of course, is silly and it is much too much to pay $19.95 for it. Thus, the most interesting aspect of the book is historian Schlesinger's valiant struggle to escape exactly this kind of projection, which he loses with a sigh of released sentiment, nursed since 1968. The real value of this wrestling between one's emotional propensities and one's intellectual inhibitions, as performed by Schlesinger, we assess at $5.95 — well below the book's market price. □

Stage

Lives Fractured by Rubbish

Lanford Wilson: *The Fifth of July;* Directed by Steven Schachter; St. Nicholas Theater Company; Chicago.

Rubbish was in the air those days, and everybody was hell-bent on calling it virtue, reason, beauty. Silly national weeklies extolled it as the path of the future and the contribution of America's magnificent, morally alert youth. *Time* indicated in cover stories that what we were witnessing was no less than the new dignity and nobleness of the American ethos. Wild-eyed Greenwich Village fools came to political power. A mentally debilitated Yale professor tagged all that the "Greening of America," and the gentlemanly — till then — *New Yorker,* intoxicated with the fumes of nonsense, published his drivel as its own manifesto. Boys and girls found the essence of being in a drugged stupor, fornication and benumbing noise which they called music. Their social awareness had been processed into prayer wheels. Their homogenized moral impulse had become limited to seeing the communist robots who killed their American peers in Vietnam as redeeming angels of justice. Cowardice became sensibility, ignorance spirtuality, and vulgarity innocence.

Many called it counterculture — a miscreated word for a freakish decade which pretended to elevate life's contents by dwarfing them; others called it an historical aberration. Watching Mr. Wilson's play, one is more than certain that the latter were correct.

What Mr. Wilson did, was simply to show the '60s ten years later. As his sympathies are unabashedly with his characters (and it is not only an all-human sense of compassion for those mistreated by life, but rather an ideological affinity) while they convey a sense of morbid failure, the playwright must be commended for his work. This seminal ambivalence is, unfortunately, not helped much by the direction, which tends to blur rather than to emphasize it — a considerable feat in itself, as blurring the inherent ambiguity of a play requires a lot of counterproductive animus. To an unprejudiced eye, there's no doubt that the people on stage have made an awful mess of their lives because, a decade ago, they accepted a trendy and meretricious gospel as a guideline, embraced permissive indeterminism as a measure of conduct and emotions, indiscriminately slept at random with one another to the point where no one knows for sure who fathered a 13-year-old girl, and considered draft-evasion an opportunity for a trip to Europe to "have the time of one's life" while others went to Vietnam. Now, a decade later, their lives are in shambles, their inherited financial wealth (one of the characters, a millionaire's

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daughter, now an addlebrained wreck, used to fly to "people's demonstrations" in Washington in her corporate Cessna) makes them into doleful caricatures, their money problems and current aspirations sound both trivial and abominable. What's worse, their I.Q.s, as cast against dilemmas that plague them at stage time, seem not to have risen much since the time of their supposedly glamorous follies — the great times of their lives, as they still claim in their nostalgic confessions to one another.

Mr. Wilson, a co-founder and resident playwright at Circle Repertory Company, has obvious mentors in Chekhov and Tennessee Williams: from them he has learned the staccato of erupting insights, changing moods, abruptly expressed feelings. He knows how to create a background density of interrelations between persons, events, the past and the present. Whatever his initial idea, he came up with a valid condemnation. On occasion, his text sounds like a hippie version of *You Can't Take It With You,* deprived of the latter's zany vivacity, but endowed with a dimension which would be hard to call serious though it is incontestably poignant.

St. Nicholas Theater Company produced *The Fifth of July* in cooperation with the Steppenwolf Theatre. Both are avant-garde, off-Loop, and off-off-Michigan Avenue outfits. Chicago needs this kind of thespian activity as much as any other city in America, which happens not to be New York. The theater calls itself in promotional copy "a center of performing arts, with a commitment to the development of new plays and playwrights." Its artistic director, Mr. Steven Schachter, vows to keep "St. Nicholas in the mainstream of contemporary theater," which is an alluring promise. Over a couple of decades, the contemporary theater has come to mean a sort of lethargic, ideologically standardized progressivism of both form and substance, which since *Roi-Ubu* and the dadaists — that is, for almost three-quarters of a century — still passes for youth, imaginativeness and novelty. On and off, it is challenged in its "progressiveness" by socialist realist playwrights — and so it goes. Whether the American theater will make a difference in this state of affairs remains to be seen. The New York theater culture has failed in this respect. Chicago thus has a chance to become something more than a theatrical asylum for routine sympathies and postures, to enlarge conceptually its commitment to real art stages, to display an honest showdown of *Weltanschauungs.* Whether the little house on North Halsted, converted from a printing plant into a chamber theater and suffused with a serious warmth of dedication, will make good on its promise should be quite interesting. We believe that it can, and we will be watching it with goodwill and expectation. (ES) □

Screen

Hollywood's Degradation and Fall

***Eyes of Laura Mars;* Directed by Irvin Kershner; Written by John Carpenter and David Goodman; Columbia Pictures.**

***National Lampoon's Animal House;* Directed by John Landis; Written by Harold Ramis, Douglas Kenney and Chris Miller; Universal Pictures.**

***Who'll Stop the Rain;* Directed by Karel Reisz; Written by Herb Jaffe and Gabriel Katzka; United Artists.**

***The Buddy Holly Story;* Directed by Steve Rash; Written by Alan Swyer; Columbia Pictures.**

by Eric Shapearo

According to financial reports, Hollywood has never been better. The accounts in which movies are budgeted and, consequently, announce their revenues, are routinely astronomical. The technology of filmmaking has reached unsurpassed levels; directing, acting, camera work of even the most standardized product show smooth technical professionalism once considered the mark of the best. Yet, all those splendors are of no avail. Hollywood has hit bottom. It has lost its sway over souls. The average moviegoer, who once lived for years with the images stored under his eyelids in his intercourse with a motion picture in the darkness of a movie house, now remembers nothing the next morning of what he saw the night before. Hollywood steps up the onslaught of the extraordinary: gore, lewdness and extraterrestrial beings are massively sent into the battle. Cynical critics, most of them simple-minded reporters who call themselves reviewers, have nothing in their brains but second-hand pseudo-intellectual poses, and want nothing but the attractive freebies that go with the assignment, are doing everything they can to prod the public's interest in films. Such interest, sure enough, is an American tradition, but the reverence and admiration in which it was wrapped for six-odd decades of American culture is irrevocably gone.

To point out why it is so would require a treatise. To encapsulate a causal factor or two, I would offer this: As with every popular art, Hollywood, its capitalistic mechanism and rationale notwithstanding, has always had to project a propoor and antirich bias; the poor have always had to be the moral heroes and the rich objects of either distrust or derision. The conflict between love and greed, or between lust-for-life ethics and blue-nose ethics, was usually presented with the same social overtone; however, the

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rich in Hollywood's old catechism never were abstractions of evil; in the end they were either examples for the poor to emulate, or partners in some sort of moral rehabilitation, or adversaries in life's vicissitudes. This kind of millionaire populism seemed wholesome, rational and acceptable to everybody in America; practitioners like John Ford and Frank Capra had no trouble bringing America to tears or exultation, and were therefore remembered.

All this has changed. The star system no longer sustains the concept of good versus bad, virtue versus evil; the screen presence of the old stars has been replaced by the mere actorship and suspicious business acumen of the big names of today, who seem to be dramatic entrepreneurs rather than film artists. Their total indifference to whom they portray and by what means they achieve success is appalling. The jarring, garish, populist radicalism of directors and producers, which, in their minds, gives them a sense of contemporaneity, clashes so vulgarly with their wealth and life-styles that it transforms them into social and cultural caricatures. Their product, most often vapid, insipid, and barren, not only is unable to generate popular attachment, but, derived from a world conceptualized at cocktail parties, smoke-ins and orgies, it tends to falsify reality to the point of a lurid parody. Licentiousness versus bluenose is no longer rebelliously didactic, as the latter have become the bearers of some exceptional virtue, while the former is now a tacky moral conformism, a commodity mass-marketed like chewing gum. The value-free, mass-cultural "creativity" may, of course, prove profitable, but artistically can turn out nothing but trash. In such a climate, formal astuteness occasionally originates mock sentimentality, technical brilliance, stylized professionalism, decadent sophistication, or, at best, a *pièce du milieu*. For Hollywood, which has always aspired to the status of an autonomous culture, it means an unprecedented downfall. The movies listed below document Hollywood's new low.

* * *

Eyes of Laura Mars exemplifies the Liberal Culture's destruction of Hollywood's one-time ability to handle positive feelings. Declared "schlocky," "boring" or "cheap" decades ago by the libcultural wisdom, positive feelings have finally been rooted out and replaced by the New Emotionality devised from abomination, fear and violence. Human sensibility, wiped from the "schmaltzy" lubricant, becomes in our time hopelessly impoverished, dried out, reduced from sentiments to reactions. *Eyes of Laura Mars* is about empty, worn-out people who live lives of animalistic loneliness in a self-created, modish jungle, and kill each other for no reason at all, or at least for no reason graspable by normal minds. A critic said that it is a movie about women who need no one. It's a half-truth: it's about women whom no one needs and who do not need themselves. This extreme alienation is forcibly made into a new aesthetics, or at least style. All this style needs is a plot concocted from a sleazy paperback psychoanalysis and a visual parade of repulsiveness in deed, look and intention. The cynicism with which the "creators" of such movies — directors, scriptwriters, actors — go into osmosis with their "characters" is unmatched by any period of decadence in the history of culture. *Eyes* has unusually gory detail, but not to horrify, rather to anesthetize — a heinous "artistic" mission. The nonsensicality of the story is overpowering. One feels helpless facing this ugly movie made by ugly people about ugly people and enacted by repugnant performers. One leaves the cinema with a wary feeling that words like "rationality" or "compassion" have been brutally evicted from a reality on which Orwell would have wanted to comment if he had known it.

* * *

Animalism as fun is promoted in a movie properly entitled *National Lampoon's Animal House*. The mammalian, cetacean and avian capacity for merriment is known to zoologists; there is abundant evidence of a rich tradition of humor in the world of primates, from which we inherited the comicality of pranks and high jinks. In their earliest stage of evolution humans noticed that a comical tension exists when badness is mistaken for goodness, while what pretends to be good actually stinks — this abysmal enigma of existence being a veritable gold mine of potential laughter. Ever since, mankind has developed and refined this observation into some treasures of comedy, but this seems to have had no impact upon the creators of *Animal House*. Thus, they once again revert to the most primitive source for gaiety: naughtiness about early sexual drives and the joys of random destruction — and we all laugh, as laughing is an uncontrolled impulse, often just a mindless contraction of nerves.

* * *

Wars are won or lost; history registers few draws, though inconclusiveness of outcome is a common occurrence. Neither victory nor defeat has easily predictable results. The first sometimes turns into lassitude which frustrates and poisons societies. The latter may prove a shake-up for rebirth and be pregnant with future triumphs of group will. France did not disintegrate after Sedan in 1870, but came to nurture a revanchist determination amidst the semblance of insouciance. England, after that heroic victory of 1945, felt only a wish to dismantle its historic assets.

What history was unfamiliar with was the spectacle of a huge military force that left the theater of war undefeated but disgusted. Mankind had never seen a superior war machine whose political owners, in the midst of action, became suffused with a suspicion that the moral costs of waging

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a war made it politically unprofitable; this malaise at the top made everybody around so fed up that soldiers just packed their bags and left the battlefield. It was America that acquired the honor of introducing such a novelty in the historiography of warfare.

If both victory and defeat can induce a national renaissance as well as demoralization and decline — what should be the aftermath of a walkout? To my mind, the society would be far from disintegrating, but its culture, especially the arts, would become debased, soiled and would begin to drool. That's exactly what has happened to America since Vietnam, and *Who'll Stop the Rain* is a perfect example of drooling.

The movie tries to say something new about the nature of wars. All wars involve the same mud, blood, mutilation, suffering, fear and collapse of weaker characters, and it requires a force of either intellect or feeling to say something new about all that. Such force is alien to the makers of this movie, so they soon abandon their initial ambition, and turn out the routine Hollywood bang-bang-go-get'em chase after some earthly possession. Once it was gold, or a bag of money, this time it's a bag of dope. The reputedly radical director from Europe is, of course, unwilling to connect any human value to the war, or to America *in toto,* so he purposely jumbles motifs just to make U.S. antinarcotic authorities look like rascals, but even this point evades him, and no one on screen, or in the audience, knows for sure who is who and why they all act in such a way. The story has a central character who is built like a gladiator, reads Nietzsche and behaves like a cross between a retarded child and Spillane's Mike Hammer. His highest moral and philosophical tenet is to never give in to morons; one does not need Nietzsche to form such a complex wisdom, a Marine drill camp would suffice. Some critics were blabbing about his being a Conradian hero, proving that their knowledge of Conrad and his characters comes from reference books.

The final showdown takes place in a spectacular mountainous terrain, quite a ritualistic setting for the narrative denouements in this kind of movie. There's plenty of shooting and crawling behind the rocks — Raoul Walsh's *High Sierra,* perhaps the best of those generic clichés, comes to mind. It's a telling connotation. When Humphrey Bogart, deprived by the movie script of any involvement with Nietzsche or war-inflicted neurosis, was dying on screen — we grieved. When the protagonists of *Who'll Stop the Rain* are butchered, a palpable sense of indifference can be felt in the darkness of the audience: people munch popcorn, blow their noses, slurp coke. Those heroes make no difference to us, no one gives a damn for them. And that's what I mean by the debasement of arts after wars abandoned by default.

* * *

The Buddy Holly Story is replete with embarrassing simplism in picturing people, their wishes and fortunes, not to mention their rapport with one another, with society and society's with them. On the other hand, it conveys some feeling about the authenticity of innocence — no mean feat, as innocence is a thoroughly suspicious part of the reality and a slippery notion. The beginnings of rock'n'roll as a sociocultural phenomenon were innocence itself: just another flavor in the giant brew of American grassroots music — a specific folklore in itself, a product of technology as much as of feelings and moods, perhaps the first folk art conceived not only by talent, but also by audio-amplification and mechanical means of distribution. As such, it was just another link in the evolution of that successful and fascinating fusion that blended the rhythm of the American life with syncopated music and transmitted to the rest of the world some sense of and about America. It fell prey, in the '60s, to sham, fraud, fanaticism and exploitation by a coalition of "artists" and business operators who wrote into it nonexistent contents and "values." *The Buddy Holly Story* rectifies, a bit, the rock'n'roll image by indicating that when it was simple and natural, it possessed a certain vivacity which could serve as the basic stuff for a wholesome melodrama — the only cultural function this kind of artistry and creativity is meant to perform. Sentimentalists may be silly, messy and shallow, but if they are sincere, nobody gets hurt — neither culture, nor individual destinies, nor human sensibilities. When they become vehicles for half-baked ideologies, the breakdown of culture is inevitable. And this is what present-day Hollywood is all about. □

The American Scene

Motherly Instinct

In *Ladies' Home Journal,* Mrs. Betty Ford revealed all her concern for her twenty-one year old daughter Susan: "I honestly don't think she's anywhere near ready to get married and have a baby," she wrote, though, as we all know, and Mrs. Ford is as well privy to it as we are, the second peril hovers over the young, swinging set these days in this country. So in case the mishap strikes, Mrs. Ford has a method to deal with it which is well-tested in her circle: "I would want to take her to a psychiatrist and see what he thought about how she could handle an abortion."

Think Till the Very End

Mr. Jack Mabley correctly deplores, in the *Chicago Tribune,* the tremendous scope and staggering profits of the pornography industry. According to his estimation, pornography grosses more these days than the motion picture and record industries combined.

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Mr. Mabley seems quite concerned with this state of things, and justly so. He lists countless details of how bad things are, like, for one:

> "Juries are bringing in verdicts reflecting their opinions that pornography really doesn't do adults any harm. . . ."

and concludes:

> "Historians may have a different interpretation of increasing decadence in the moral fabric of a great nation."

What Mr. Mabley seems unwilling to do is to think over all the elements of the phenomenon till the very end. The present state of affairs has its source not in the popularity of pornography (which was never a dirty old man's preserve, but always a distinct interest of adolescents and middle-aged persons of both sexes as well) but in its acceptance by the opinion-making idea industry which is dominated by liberal thinking. Its thriving is not conditioned by its demand, as many of its apologists claim (and whose claim Mr. Mabley seems to believe), but by its pervasive omnipresence once legal and behavioral obstacles are removed from the society's everydayness. To brand this annulment of obligations as the consequence of the fashionable liberal idea that freedom does *not* involve responsibilities requires courage of reasoning. Condemning the popular interest in prurience *without* condemning the *idea* that unbridled permission is the gist of freedom is but a half-way measure. It's not so much the pornographer, who is just the symptom of a social disease, but the liberal pundit and his political tools who are the very origins and bacteria of our disintegration. Let's hope that Mr. Mabley will eventually recognize this "linkage" and its dimension: without perceiving it, every attempt to thwart the malady will be like trying to cure cancer with aspirin. □

Journalism

Policy Review's Promise

The first six issues of *Policy Review,* a quarterly published by The Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C., have established it as a new and impressive presence in the universe of the American written word. This universe transmogrifies, in the tormented perception of many, into a cosmic Niagara which daily falls upon America with a thunderous avalanche of printed paper. However, the benumbing glut and noise notwithstanding, *Policy Review* became noticed, quoted and accepted by many as a not befuddling, but clarifying agent — and this, for the beginning, is quite a success for Robert L. Schuettinger, its editor-in-chief.

The quarterly has high ambitions of being a serious intellectual forum for well-tempered conservative ideas dealing with public matters. However, it does not practice narrow sectarianism, but publishes authors, scholars and experts who do not necessarily fit the conservative denomination. Neither does it insist on pretentious size in its presented essays; it does not shy from occasionally throwing in meaningful vignettes. We especially liked one by D. P. Moynihan, who, in the fall issue, vents his ironic displeasure with the semantic practices of State Department officers. He correctly points out that either they haven't the slightest idea what they are talking about, or they ardently wish to help promote the goals of the enemies of the country they are supposed to serve. By accepting the prototalitarian nomenclatures in Africa, and calling brutal terrorism a "liberation movement," or Moscow's henchmen "patriots," the State Department officers are either dupes, or willing tools of forces deadly hostile to ourselves. We feel obliged to add that they do this with *our* money. □

Special Offerings

During the '60s, America was inundated by small publications which advocated her demise, either through revolution or through dissolution in the narcotic limbo. They loved nothing more than to call themselves the "underground" press, which intimated that they were penniless and brutally persecuted by unnamed powers, and had to operate in clandestineness. However, the papers were available in broad daylight on every street corner, and had plenty of money from assorted heirs to corporate fortunes whose brains were softened by hallucinogens.

The mega-hoax of the "underground" press has ebbed out and has been replaced, in the mid-seventies, by its precise opposite — that is, by privately published small periodicals which, with a scrupulous honesty, avoid calling themselves anything but newsletters, pamphlets, surveys and reports. They admit to having full freedom of expression and very little money, obtained not from addle-brained tycoon progenies, but from people who make small donations, either because they share the publisher's convictions, or because they are interested in what the editors have to say. Their chief enemy is the same big, well-established Liberal-Cultural press which assiduously supported the "underground" press.

The reason why the *Newsweeks* and *Washington Posts* of this country relished the "underground" freakishness and "heroism" was that the latter provided offbeat sensationalism for the former's routine copy; moreover, their shallow, unprepossessing fibs never

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turned into actual competition. For the analogous reason, the *New York Times, People* or *Boston Globe* never report on the highly personalized press of newsletters and pamphlets — as they most often tell well-researched truth and take sides with those who do not find favor in the Liberal Culture's eyes. Thus, they represent dangerous competition, and the best way to cope with them is to stretch a curtain of stony silence over their existence.

There are many worthy exemplifications of this phenomenon, which we could call the Personal Press — as it is produced by distinguished persons in lieu of monstrous conglomerates, and as it aspires to appeal to individuals instead of to an amorphous mass of "readers."

One of the most prominent among them is certainly the *AIM Report,* published by Accuracy in Media, Inc., in Washington, D.C. It is dedicated to exposing the blatant biases, lies, deformations and abuses of the Establishment press, and its landmark is its flawless research and thorough analysis of the questioned material. It is relatively better known than some others, since the libcultural media outlets scrutinized by *AIM* often respond by heaping invectives and trivial accusations on it — which amounts to a publicity of sorts.

The Ragan Report, from Chicago, publishes "A Weekly Survey of Ideas and Methods for School Communicators." Since early this year, this newsletter has manifested an admirable tenacity in wielding the weapons of common sense and moderation against the facile trendiness of liberal "principles" in public education. Here are some excerpts from an editorial:

> "That values are changing there can be no doubt. To understand them, though, and to resist the mass onslaughts of simplistic solutions, the adolescent should be encouraged to read books that show the complexities and ambiguities that are a part of any contemporary discussion about social and political relations. . . .
>
> "To supinely give all powers to teachers, administrators, librarians, and distant curriculum committees is to forget that these people, well-meaning though they may be, also reflect their prejudices; and it is a healthy thing in our country that permits citizens to attend school board meetings, stand up and raise hell because they don't like the way the maid in *Romeo and Juliet* talks.
>
> "Let them holler. At least they're watching and talking — and that isn't all bad."

Access to Energy, "A Pro-Science, Pro-Technology, Pro-Free-Enterprise Monthly Newsletter," comes from Boulder, Colorado, where it is written, edited and published by a one-man-nuclear-power-plant — Dr. Petr Beckmann. A professor of electrical engineering at the University of Colorado, Dr. Beckmann knows just about everything there is to know about nuclear physics, everything that happens to it in the ocean of ideological and political lies and distortions, and everything being done about it in Congress to boot. Like every conservative, he is staunchly progressive on this matter, and valiantly fights the reactionary conservationists. We, at the *Chronicles of Culture,* were always puzzled by the kinkiness of the liberal linguistics which terms conservationism progress. The liberal *angst* of nuclear progress seems to us peculiarly obscurantist. Technological progress, to our mind, always introduced a new metaphysics of fate: the Middle Ages did not know air crashes, while all the perils of new machinery during the Industrial Revolution were dismissed by the liberals who then saw in technological progress mankind's deliverance. The ontological argument against the hazards of nuclear energy, as it is promoted by the Barry Commoners and their ilk, always seemed to us *au pair* with Groucho Marx's or W. C. Fields' witticisms.

The Liberal Culture's hostility to the nonliberal Personal Press is understandable but regrettable. In the end, it means an irate contempt for the human mind's possibilities, for the pluralism of good civic instincts. They are met head-on by the synergic effort of the official establishment, hell-bent on suppressing them because they voice independence from the regimented centers of opinion on Madison Avenue, or Michigan Avenue, or Wilshire Boulevard. *AIM, Ragan Report* and *Access to Energy* struggle for a better, more rational world, but because *Time* and the *Chicago Tribune* have preordained that struggle wrong, it is sentenced by the media kangaroo court to nonexistence. However, the intelligent, intellectually based, diligent conservative sleuthing and muckraking has already started. Its vehicle is the Personal Press. It has a long way to go, but knowing the venality of the liberal media, a time will come when Ragan, Beckmann and others will be photographed for the features about "outstanding editors" in the so-called "national" magazines. (LT) □

Time's Selective Memory

Ignazio Silone died, and *Time* honored him with an obituary. We can read there:

> "DIED, Ignazio Silone, 78, Italian novelist and a founding member of his country's Communist Party in 1921; in Geneva. Driven into Swiss exile by Mussolini's blackshirts for his political activities, Silone wrote two bitterly anti-Fascist and well-received novels, *Fontamara* (1930) and *Bread and Wine* (1936). Returning to Italy in 1944, he had a second fling with politics, then retired to his writing."

Silone's creative life could be di-

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vided into nine years of active dedication to communism and 48 years of fierce fighting against it. What *Time* meticulously does *not* report is that Silone left the Communist Party in 1930, and, until his death, he not only denounced the communist revolution and the Soviet state as the ultimate in "tyrannical degeneration," but also was the leading figure in the Italian anti-communist ideological and political front. It's doubtful that the Agitprop department of the U.S. Communist Party could have performed a better excision of truth in their press releases than did *Time's* editors. □

Chicago Tribune's Semantics

What is a *Chicago Tribune* "critic"? The answer is a certain Harriet Choice, who is described in her by-line as a "jazz critic." She writes about the Fifth Annual Tribute to Duke Ellington. Of Ellington, she has to say:

> ". . . Ellington legacy provided a beautiful evening of music and created that unusual common meeting for jazz fans and artists. . ."

Circa 400 words about who played what on which instrument follow. □

Liberal Culture

Oh! Not Again!

A certain Andrew Kopkind, in a piece called "Cold War II," published by the pinkish organ of the New York socioradic dandy set *New Times* (October 30, 1978):

> "The gravest threat to U.S.-Soviet relations isn't Russian malfeasance, but rather a small group of unrestricted hawks determined to derail detente."

Love and Death Among Subhumans

A punk rock "musician" by the unprepossessing name of Sid Vicious allegedly stabbed to death his girlfriend, Nauseating Nancy, in the Hotel Chelsea, New York City. Nothing to be terribly excited about, except for the rank gravy in which the Liberal Culture's organs serve the saga. They try to turn it into a latter-day "Frankie and Johnny," comfortably forgetting that Frankie killed, intoxicated by love and pride, while Sid purportedly butchered, intoxicated by dope and bestiality. Both Sid and Nancy belonged to the humanoid jet set. Both were hopeless narcomaniacs who never had trouble with money: Mr. Vicious' "art" provided him with a six figure income for his "cultural" messages. *New York Magazine* decided to perpetuate his fame: its report of the murder is entitled "A Love Story," and is enriched by pictures in which Mr. Vicious sports a T-shirt with a huge swastika on his heroinical chest. The apologists of punk rock consider Nazi regalia fun, the survivors of Auschwitz have another name for it. I guess *Village Voice* has, albeit inadvertently, put the whole event into proper perspective. It ran a picture of Mr. Vicious, a stuporous clod of a subhuman, being taken into custody by police. The caption:

> "McLaren [Vicious' agent] should have Sid out on $50,000 bail by now. A new record, supposedly to pay his legal fees, is in the works."

Which means that the Liberal Culture, at least in this case, subsidizes murder — as it is the extreme libcultists, often in their teens, who pay for punk "music," while countless libcultural hard-sell canards like *Rolling Stone* or *Village Voice,* push it frantically as cultural fare.

Spiritual Disinheritance

> ". . . that stillness. That silence. It lies at the heart of all mythicizing, all the spiritual experience — both real and imagined — that attaches to the city. I hated it."

This is how the *Village Voice* headlines an article on Jerusalem by one of its enraged, libcultural, "literary" hipsters.

For the last 3,000 years, it has been considered the most seminal silence in the universe. All our freedoms originated in that spiritual experience. Even the *Village Voice's* right to a noisy hecticality and the spouting of gibberish has its roots in that stillness and the moral precepts born in it.

Intrafamily Sex

The wording is chic and new. It means, however, a hoary practice, condemned by mankind since its dawn. The Liberal Culture, as represented by its ideological psychologists, has recently put it back into focus. It's incest, the latest rage of libcultural gurus and pornographers. If anyone has any doubt as to who's to blame for its latter-day bloom, Joan Beck, columnist in search of truth, delivers the answer:

> "Often a molesting father argues that incest is harmless, or even educational for his daughter. Pamela, for example, says her father *quoted books* to her and insisted, 'There's nothing wrong with it, with the father initiating the daughter.' This view of incest as just another happy expression of sexual freedom is supported by enthusiastic letters describing intrafamily sex in both soft and hard core porn magazines." □

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Polemics & Exchanges

The Subtleties of Propaganda or *Twelve Angry Men* Revisited

by David H. Hirsch

The purpose of Reginald Rose's fine script for the 1957 movie *Twelve Angry Men* seems to have been to make the case for humane treatment of the accused. A first viewing tends to leave the viewer with the feeling that justice has been done and that the jury system has worked, proving the wisdom of our founding fathers in creating so perfect an instrument of justice. For those who have not had an opportunity to view the film recently, let me, as a reminder, quote a summary of the film that appears in the 1975 edition of *TV Movies:* "Brilliant courtroom film; Fonda does his best to convince eleven other jurors that their hasty conviction of boy on trial should be reconsidered." One correction should be made. Everything that happens in front of the viewer takes place in a jury room following the trial, and not in the courtroom.

With his usual soft-spoken reasonableness, Henry Fonda emerges as a sympathetic hero in the American grain. He takes an unpopular position (one against eleven) and finally triumphs through a combination of determination, unswerving allegiance to principle, rational examination of evidence, and persuasiveness. Rose's orchestration of character is brilliant, and his ability to capture the group dynamics of the situation is uncanny. Fonda, relentless but never brash, is seemingly driven by an abstract sense of the sanctity of justice and the jury system. Ed Begley is a hard-nosed proletarian bigot. Lee J. Cobb is a frustrated proletarian with a personal problem, namely a rebellious ne'er-do-well son. E. G. Marshall is a man who seems to be Fonda's equal in education and reasonableness, a professional of some sort, or perhaps an executive. These three are the toughest holdouts for a guilty verdict, the persons who must be convinced beyond any reasonable doubt. There is also an old man who is the first to give Fonda moral support. The other seven jurors enter into the dynamics of the situation at times, but primarily they are there to be swayed one way or another and their chief function is to exert peer group pressure on each other simply by weight of numbers. It is, however, the interchanges between Fonda and the old man, on the one hand, and the other three I have mentioned, on the other, that are most important. The identities of the jurors are kept quite secret. We know neither the names nor the occupations of the weightiest characters. An advertising account executive is identified and ridiculed for his superficiality and indecisiveness; a house painter is also identified, who threatens the volatile Lee J. Cobb physically, and keeps him from silencing the old man.

About Fonda, the central character, we learn very little. One wonders what kind of man could have performed the very considerable heroics engaged in by Fonda. These heroics are both mental and physical, and to understand their magnitude one must know a little more about the action. On a sweltering summer day, twelve male jurors are locked into a stuffy room. On the first vote eleven of the jurors find the defendant guilty. Everybody is anxious to get the verdict over with and leave. Only Fonda has not been convinced. In fact, it is not clear that he is not convinced, but he takes the position that a decision involving a man's life should not be taken in haste, and therefore pleads for deliberation and discussion. Against eleven men who are convinced and who want to get the thing over with, Fonda stands alone on the basis of a principle and the glimmering possibility of a vague doubt. After some preliminary arguing and sparring the jurors agree to a closed vote with the following condition: if the vote remains eleven to one, Fonda will give in, but if he has persuaded one other juror to vote against convicting, then the discussion will continue. The old man decides to go along with Fonda, not because he has changed his mind about the defendant's guilt, but because he has seen the wisdom of the argument that it is unseemly to reach a decision that involves a man's life too hastily. Against the tirades and threats of Cobb and Begley, against the cold logic of Marshall, and against both the silent and vocal resentment of the others, Fonda stands his ground.

When challenged he begins to sow seeds of dissension among those who were unanimous before. He starts with the supposition that the defense attorney was incompetent. Why he should make such an assumption is not clear. This supposition is challenged, of course. But once the possibility is introduced it becomes an actuality. When the question is asked, later in the course of the discussion, "Why didn't the defense lawyer point out such and such?" the answer is that he was incompetent, and the supposition has become a fact.

From the time that he introduces the seed of doubt, Fonda spends the rest of the film doing the defense attorney's work of destroying the prosecution's case, which has been built on three pieces of evidence: the murder weapon, which is a switchblade at first thought to be unusual but later proved to be commonplace by Fonda who has gone out and bought one just like it

Professor Hirsch is chairman of the Department of English, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.

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during the trial; the testimony of an old man, who says that he heard a body fall to the floor of the apartment above him and that he then hastened to the stairwell where he saw the accused running down the stairs; and finally, the testimony of a middle-aged bachelor woman who says she saw the accused actually stab his father just as an elevated train was passing by her apartment.

Presumably, what Fonda does is to undermine the conclusiveness of the evidence. As I mentioned, he demonstrates that the knife is not unique. He then goes through a laborious demonstration calculated to show that the elderly male witness, who apparently has a pronounced limp, could not have reached the stairwell in the time he said he did, nor could he have heard a body fall while the elevated train was passing by; and finally, the old man juror suddenly remembers that the bachelor lady witness had eyeglass marks on the bridge of her nose, though she did not wear glasses at the trial, and on his remembering this, other jurors suddenly have their own memories restored. They agree that she must have needed glasses and that she would not have been wearing them while lying in bed trying to go to sleep. Also, they conclude that the elevated train would have blocked her view, so that she could in no way have seen what she said she saw. The jurors now have erased all the testimony, not because the witnesses intentionally perjured themselves, but because they were fallible human beings whose testimony could not be taken at face value. The old man witness wanted attention, so he convinced himself that he had actually seen the accused running down the stairs. The middle-aged lady was also frustrated in her life and therefore she, too, convinced herself that she had seen something worth reporting.

The last three holdouts on the jury are Begley, Marshall, and Cobb. From the first we are led to infer that the defendant is a member of an oppressed minority. Like one of the other jurors (Jack Klugman), the defendant was raised in the slums. Begley "knows" these "types." They are all alike, he fulminates. They put no value on human life. Fonda, hearing this, suffers such drivel in silence. All of this is beside the point, which is "Is there a reasonable doubt?" Marshall holds out on pure logic. The boy had a motive to kill his father and the testimony of the witnesses indicated that he did. But Marshall folds when he remembers seeing the eyeglass marks on the lady witness. Cobb is the last to go down. He has been hysterical most of the time. The kid must be punished. Baited by Fonda, Cobb threatens to kill him, thereby proving, presumably, that when the defendant made the same threat to his father, subsequently murdered, he did not mean the threat any more than Cobb did. But no one ever ascertains whether Cobb really meant his threat or not and whether he might not indeed kill Fonda, given the opportunity. Ultimately, the truth emerges that Cobb really wants to punish his own son and would do so vicariously by convicting the defendant of murdering his father.

Asked by the gloating and triumphant Fonda his reasons for continuing to vote guilty when everyone else is now experiencing reasonable doubt, the inarticulate Cobb breaks down and cries. Unlike Fonda, he cannot stand up to the pressure when he is down by eleven to one. He changes his vote and the defendant is acquitted. The tone of the ending is one of general satisfaction. The jurors are all pleased with themselves, and in the final scene, Fonda and the old man introduce themselves to each other (the first time names are spoken) and then each goes his own way. We are led to feel that justice has been served. One courageous, intelligent, principled man has made the system work.

But when one ponders the new case built by Rose-Fonda in the jury room, it turns out to be quite as flimsy as the original case apparently presented by the prosecuting attorney. Take, first, the business of the eyeglass marks. If the woman appeared to testify without wearing glasses and nobody noticed her stumbling or feeling her way around, then we could assume that she might not have needed glasses for normal, everyday activities. In fact, many middle-aged people have good general vision but need glasses for reading or for doing detail work. Moreover, the chances are that the marks on the bridge of the woman's nose would not have been visible (especially at the distance from the jury box to the witness stand) since such marks disappear in a short time once the pressure is removed. The witness who testified that he heard a thump might have heard the thump even if the elevated train was passing by, since the noise made by a body falling upon the ceiling over one's head is different in nature from the sound of a train and would not necessarily blend in. As far as Fonda's demonstration that the old man could not have reached the stairwell in the time he said, it ignores the fact that in an emergency or imagined emergency a person moves faster than he does when not under pressure.

Does this film prove, then, that justice was served? In fact the film seems to indicate, not that the jury system can be made to work by a high-principled man, but that it can be undermined by a person who is strong-willed, articulate, and derives ego gratification from manipulating other people. Rose's script demonstrates exactly how unreliable run-of-the-mill human beings are. A clever con man can talk them out of what they have firmly believed. When we begin to view the events of the film from this perspective, another clever device surfaces. Rose gives us Freudian vignettes of the "bad guy," Lee J. Cobb, but he is careful to keep Fonda cloaked in mystery. What are Fonda's hang-ups? Could it be that by

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manipulating the other jurors he is not acting out of pure principle but is satisfying some ego need of his own that is not revealed to us? The convicters are laid bare: Begley is a cheap bigot; Marshall a heartless robot; Cobb a narrow-minded failed father. But who is Fonda, and why is it necessary to conceal his true identity? Fonda appears to be Everyman, a tribute to the faith that "all men are created equal." But Fonda is *not* equal. He is superior in ability, intelligence, and education. He is, though the fact is well-concealed, an intellectual (if one may say so, a liberal intellectual) and therefore he is, by definition, a doubter, someone who has been trained to find "a reasonable doubt" even in the most obvious fact. It was probably necessary to maintain Fonda's cover in order to make the "moral" of the film work. Had he been identified by occupation and/or education as a "liberal intellectual" he would have lost his status as Democratic Everyman.

But though Fonda is a doubter, his mind has no "depth." It is a wholly superficial reflection of a single principle: due process of law. And while the principle itself is a major achievement of civilization, and may even be in itself profound, nevertheless a mind that reflects this principle and nothing else must inevitably be deemed shallow. □

Editor's Comment

continued from page 5

the wholeness of life and shapes it according to its own imperious liberalism. One of its most perverse, totalitarian mendacities was recently epitomized in a sentence from a *Time* magazine essay which perfectly reflects *Time's* "philosophy" and its sense of social service:

> "Under the reign of permissiveness (made possible only by the acquiescence of a majority of Americans), a handful of pornographers flaunt their wares heedless of the public incidentally offended, and pimps herd their whores along city streets with the same tyrannical disregard for those they might offend."

The Big Lie is in parentheses. Permissiveness was never made possible by the acquiescence of a majority of Americans, but by *Time's* (and *Newsweek's*, and *New York Times'*, etc.) articles, features, copies, news and pictures which extolled it as the most "natural," "liberated" and "modern" attitude. *Time,* among others, shapes and engineers public opinion, social climates, cultural and behavioral trends and fashions, in keeping with the liberal tenet. And then when the unbound libcultural laxness in people and mores, evolved from cheap ideologies advocated by *Time,* breeds crime, mishap, psychic ills and moral collapse — *Time,* which has never condemned anything on the merit of advance reasoning, casts itself simply as an observer and reporter of the bad news. Which is a calamitous corruption of reality and truth.

Whenever voices are heard that the idea of the First Amendment has been badly vitiated, we are told that we are interfering with the people's right to know. Those who object believe that the present comportment of the media in fact helps to *create* hijackers, Mansons, Sons of Sam, and — what's much worse — deformed, sordid, nefarious modes of thinking, allegiances, perceptions in huge masses of people. A cogent opinion on this is given by Professor Arthur Miller from Harvard University:

> "No one disputes the proposition that the people have a right to know. But like any platitude, it is nothing but a generalization. The deeper questions are: Know what? and, What practices may the press employ to gather information?
>
> "As things now stand, [1] the press may publish demonstrable falsehoods, subject only to a remote threat of liability; [2] the media have arrogated to themselves the right to publish *any* 'truth,' no matter how private it may be or how prurient the interest it caters to; and [3] journalists justify using improper and intrusive techniques in terms of the 'benefit' produced by their stories. All in all, a disturbing situation."

The fact that the media maliciously ignore the nonliberal and conservative intellectual effort already has (and will have more in the future) a sinister impact on our civilization. The *Chicago Tribune,* which deems itself a meticulously evenhanded organ, will run gargantuan features on socialist journals, but will not acknowledge the existence of the intellectually impressive and influential nonliberal or conservative publications which have been multiplying throughout the nation. This is not only a misdeed, it's a mistake. Such a practice seems to be a conscious effort to split the national culture. In the '60s, a presidential commission menaced society with the prediction that because of racial strife we would be soon divided into two nations. This did not happen. However, the liberal press' ostracizing of the considerable nonliberal and conservative accumulation of thought is, actually, splitting America into two cultures. It remains to be seen which of these cultures — the liberal or the conservative one — will be the ultimate winner, even if odds are, at this historical moment, firmly on the side of the former.

— Leopold Tyrmand

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Rockford College Institute
Rockford College
5050 East State Street
Rockford, Illinois 61101

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